The Reverend Doctor Howard-John Wesley is the son of the late Rev. Dr. Alvin and Dr. Helene Wesley and represents the fifth generation of Baptist preachers in his family. Dr. Wesley is the proud pastor of the historic Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, VA. He is only the eighth pastor in the church’s 214-year history of worshipping Christ while serving humankind.

Under Dr. Wesley’s extraordinary leadership, Alfred Street Baptist Church has grown from about 2,500 to more than 7,000 members, serving the community and members through 83 active ministries with an emphasis on children’s ministries and missions. To accommodate its favor and growth, the church holds four weekend worship services, including one on Saturday nights. As a result, Dr. Wesley has launched an initiative to redesign and expand the current sanctuary and ministry facility.

Dr. Wesley is regarded as one of the most prolific and prophetic voices of justice and grace in our generation. An empathetic pastor who is not afraid to take on social and political issues, Dr. Wesley led community protest marches against the New York grand jury’s 2014 decision not to indict an NYPD officer whose chokehold led to the death of Eric Garner. His sermon, “When the Verdict Hurts,” was acknowledged in Time magazine’s July 29, 2013 cover story, “After Trayvon” as one of the best sermons preached in the United States following the “not guilty” verdict in the State of Florida v. George Zimmerman, who fatally shot 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. Three of Dr. Wesley’s sermons, “When the Verdict Hurts,” “A Rizpah Response” (and with the black hoody he donned while preaching this sermon), and “Tell Your Own Story,” will all be archived in the faith-based collection of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, DC.

Dr. Wesley is a compassionate and visionary pastor who cares deeply for the members of Alfred Street. At the church’s CAYA (Come As You Are) service, he teaches and preaches to nearly 1,000 young adults, age 22 to 35, from across the Washington, DC, metropolitan area on topics that are real and relevant to today’s young professionals. With his guidance, Alfred Street Baptist Church became the first and only faith-based institution founding donor of the NMAAHC with a $1 million donation. Dr. Wesley was twice recognized (2013 and 2016) by The Root as one of the top 100 most influential African Americans in the nation. In 2016, he received the 2016 Chairman’s Award for his work in social justice at the 47th Annual NAACP Image Awards.

A native of Chicago, Dr. Wesley is the product of the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools and graduated magna cum laude from Duke University with a bachelor of science in biomedical and electrical engineering. While in medical school, Dr. Wesley yielded to the call of God and walked away from a path to a medical career to attend seminary at the Boston University School of Theology where he was a Martin Luther King, Jr. scholar and a summa cum laude graduate in biblical studies and African American religious history. He received his doctor of ministry in preaching from Northern Baptist