First Mount Zion Academic Education Ministry (AEM) Gazette

Fall 2026 Edition

In this edition, you will find a variety of upcoming events, scholarship opportunities, important announcements, and helpful tips for the college application process, and tips for parents.

Upcoming Events



Scholarship Workshop

The AEM Scholarship Committee will host a First Mount Zion Baptist Church (FMZBC) and Hinkitch Bell Scholarship Workshop on Sunday, November 22 2026, immediately after worship service. All FMZBC juniors, 2027 graduating seniors, and their parents/guardians are encouraged to participate. A live demonstration of the online applications will be presented. Students must be a member of FMZBC for 1 year to qualify for the FMZBC and Bell Scholarships prior to the scholarship deadline of April 1, 2027.



Fall 2026 College Visit

The AEM plans to coordinate a college visit on November 11, 2026. Be on the lookout for details in the Connection Points and Messenger. Contact AEM@firstmountzionbc.org for more information.



24th Annual HBCU Festival

VIRTUAL: November 13, 4:00 – 8:00 P.M.
VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON – November 14, 10:00 A.M. -2:00 P.M.
The St. James, Industrial Road, Springfield, VA

Register for HBCU Festival

Announcements

FMZBC Tutorial Program



The FMZBC AEM Tutorial Program is back!! If you are a FMZBC Student in grades K - 12 and need Tutorial Services, this message is for you! Opening Program begins Monday, October 26, 2026 at 8 pm. First session begins 9 November from 7:00-8:30 pm. Students can signup throughout the academic school year by emailing Bro. Gerry Griffin, AEM@firstmountzionbc.org. The program follows the Prince William County School schedule.



FAFSA for 2027-2028 School Year Opened October 1

The FAFSA for the 2027–2028 school year opened on October 1, 2026. You can submit the FAFSA at fafsa.gov.

The FAFSA must be submitted every year for students to be eligible for federal aid. For more information, families can visit the federal student aid website at studentaid.gov.

Tips for submitting the FAFSA

- FSA ID. To file the FAFSA online, parents and students each need their own FSA ID. You can create an FSA ID online, and the same ID can be used for all years of college.
- Income and assets. The FAFSA requires two key types of information: income and assets. For income, the 2026–2027 FAFSA will rely on information from your 2026 federal income tax return.
- College Aid. Some colleges might require the FAFSA before awarding students certain college-based aid, including merit scholarships and grants, so filing it can still be beneficial, even if a student does not plan on taking out any federal loans.

Helpful Tips for the College Application Process

College Research

Balancing your college list ensures you have strong options when admissions decisions come out. A healthy list typically includes 7 to 10 schools distributed across three specific categories based on your academic profile (GPA and test scores).

The Ideal List Formula

Most college counselors recommend a balanced distribution like this:

- **2–3 Safety Schools** (80%+ chance of admission)
- **3–4 Match Schools** (30%–80% chance of admission)
- **2–3 Reach Schools** (Less than 30% chance of admission)

Understanding the Categories

Category	Academic Alignment	Financial Reality
Safety	Your GPA and test scores are **well above** the school's 75th percentile for admitted students.	Must be affordable or highly likely to offer significant merit aid.
Match	Your GPA and test scores fall **right in the middle** (25th to 75th percentile) of their average freshman class.	You are a competitive applicant, but admission is never a guarantee.
Reach	Your scores are **below the 25th percentile**, OR the school has an acceptance rate below 15%.	Treat highly selective schools as a reach for *everyone*, regardless of perfect scores.

Application Portals: Navigating Your Options

College application portals are central hubs where students submit transcripts, essays, recommendations, and personal data. Understanding how they differ helps students manage their time and avoid duplicating work.

The Big Three: Portal Breakdown

Feature	Common App	Coalition App (Scoir)	Institutional Portals
Scale	Over 1,000 member colleges	Over 150 member colleges	Single, specific university
Best For	Applying to multiple mainstream or out-of-state universities.	Highly collaborative planning; popular with students using Scoir.	Applying to a local university or a school not on shared platforms (e.g., MIT, Georgetown).
Key Advantage	Fill out core info once; easily track multiple deadlines in one dashboard.	Focuses on access and affordability; includes a digital locker to store work early.	Direct communication with the school; sometimes features fewer essay prompts.

 Portal Pro-Tips: Apply Smarter, Not Harder!

Ready to hit submit? Keep these three rules in mind to stay organized and stress-free:

1. **Use a Professional Email:** Use a clean, personal email address **(like *firstname.lastname@gmail.com*) for all portals. Do not** use your high school email, as it will be deactivated after graduation.

2. **Beware the "Hidden" Portals:** Submitting your Common App isn't the final step! Watch your inbox for a follow-up email from each college linking to their **unique Applicant Portal.** You must log in there to track missing documents and see your final decision.

3. **Check the Supplements**: Just because a school is on the Common App doesn't mean your work is identical. Always check the "**Dashboard"** tab for university-specific writing supplements and hidden short-answer questions.

 Quick Action**: Create your Common App or Coalition App account this week and add your top 5 colleges to preview their exact requirements!**

 Recommendation Letters: Don't Wait Until the Last Minute!

College deadlines sneak up fast, and your teachers need time to write thoughtful letters. Follow these quick steps to get the best recommendations possible:

- **Ask Early**: Request your letters at least **one month before** your first deadline. Teachers get busy, and some limit how many letters they take on!

- **Pick Core Teachers**: Choose two junior-year teachers from core subjects (English, Math, Science, or History) who can speak to your work ethic and participation.
- **Hand Over a Brag Sheet**: Fill out a student brag sheet or resume. Sharing your future major and favorite classroom moments helps your teachers write a highly personalized letter.

 Pro-Tip: Always ask your teachers **in person** first before sending the official digital request through the Common App or Scoir/Naviance!

Parent's Corner

Essential Legal Documents for College-Bound Young Adults

When your child turns 18 years old**, they legally become an adult.** This means that even if they are still on your health insurance and you are paying their college tuition, you lose automatic legal rights to see their grades, manage their money, or make medical decisions in an emergency.
To ensure you can help them navigate a crisis or handle administrative hurdles, review and secure these four essential legal documents before they head to campus.

Quick-Reference Legal Chart

Document Name	What It Does	Why You Need It as a Parent	Where to Get/Sign It
HIPAA Authorization	Allows healthcare providers to share medical information with you.	Doctors cannot legally tell you your child's medical status or condition in an emergency without this.	Medical/legal websites or an estate attorney.
Health Care Proxy *(Medical POA)*	Appoints you to make medical decisions if your child is incapacitated.	Gives you the legal authority to choose treatments if your teen is unable to speak for themselves.	State-specific medical or legal forms.
Durable Power of Attorney *(Financial POA)*	Grants you access to manage your child's finances and accounts.	Allows you to sign tax returns, access bank accounts, pay bills, and handle college tuition disputes.	Legal websites or an estate attorney (varies heavily by state).

FERPA Waiver	Grants you access to your child's college records (grades, financial aid).	Colleges will refuse to share transcripts or financial aid details with you once the student turns 18.	Provided directly by the college registrar's office.

State laws vary significantly regarding how these documents are formatted, witnessed, or combined. In some states, a medical power of attorney can be bundled directly into a Durable POA.

Action Step: We highly recommend consulting your state's laws or speaking with a local estate planning attorney to ensure your forms are legally binding in your home state and the state where your child will attend college.

 Supporting Your College-Bound Student

The road to college is an emotional journey for the whole family. Here is how you can best support your student this month while fostering their independence:

- **Become a Consultant, Not a Manager:** Let your student take ownership of their applications, essays, and deadlines. It builds confidence and ensures their unique voice shines through to admissions officers.
- **Set a "College Talk" Boundaries:** To avoid burnout, designate one hour a week for college updates instead of asking about it daily. Keep the rest of the week focused on enjoying their final semesters at home.
- **Build a Shared Calendar:** Keep track of upcoming deadlines using a shared digital calendar or a fridge checklist. This gives you peace of mind without needing to nag.

 Remember: Your excitement and reassurance are their biggest safety net during this high-stress season!

Scholarships

The table below provides a list of annual scholarship opportunities. The due dates and amounts may vary from year to year. However, the links to access the application are valid. We encourage you to periodically check the website for the most current information.

Scholarship Name	Description	Amount	Deadline	How To Apply
Beauty Changes Lives Scholarships	Students pursuing eligible Cosmetology, barbering, or hair design careers.	Varies	31 October	**https://beautychangeslives.org/scholarships-opportunities/?offer_category=scholarship#all-offers-list**
McCann STEM Scholarship	Student pursuing a degree in science, technology, engineering, or math.	$2,000	31 October	**https://mccannsystems.com/stem-scholarship-2026/**
Friedman & Simon LLP Academic Scholarship	Student pursuing a higher education at an accredited college or university.	$1,500	1 November	**https://www.friedmansimon.com/about/scholarships/academic-scholarship/**
Visual Arts Fellowship Application	Applicants must be enrolled full-time in a program at an accredited college, university, or school of the arts.	$4,000	6 November	**https://vmfa.formstack.com/forms/2027_28_fellowship_application**
Elks National Foundation Most Valuable Student Scholarship	Students pursuing a four-year degree, in a U.S. college or university.	Up to $7,500	12 November	**https://www.elks.org/scholars/scholarships/mvs.cfm**
Thurgood Marshall and Lowes Scholarship Fund	Offers financial assistance to students attending HBCUs.	Varies	1 December	**https://tmcf.org/open-scholarships/2026-2027-tmcf-lowes-gap-scholarship/**
Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholarship	DoD Scholarship Program for STEM Students.	Varies	4 December	**https://www.smartscholarship.org/smart/en**
Educational and Charitable Foundation ("ECF") STEM Scholarship	Graduating high school senior planning to attend a HBCU with a 3.0 GPA.	$3,000	28 February	**https://form.jotform.com/ecfpresident/stem-Fall2026**
ECF HBCU Scholarship	Graduating high school senior attending a HBCU with a 3.0 GPA.	$3,000	28 February	**https://form.jotform.com/ecfpresident/hbcu-app-Fall2026**
ECF Estelle Gaymon Memorial Scholarship	Graduating high school senior attending a HBCU with a 3.0 GPA.	$3,000	28 February	**https://form.jotform.com/ecfpresident/eg-app-Fall2026**

Scholarship Name	Description	Amount	Deadline	How To Apply
Akerson Family Foundation Scholarship	Four-year renewable scholarship awarded to first-generation, college-bound seniors who demonstrate strong academic skills, financial need, and community/school engagement.	$50,000	1 March	**https://www.affscholars.org/apply-1**
Jennie Dean Scholarship	Provides financial assistance to students in pursuit of higher education.	$1,000-$3,000	6 March	**https://www.jenniedeanedufdn.org/services** **Application available 15 January.**
PWCAC Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Scholarship	African American graduating 2027 senior resident of Prince William County, City of Manassas, or City of Manassas.	TBD	TBD	https://www.pwcacdst.org/scholarships **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline.**
Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative (NOVEC) Scholarship	Awarded to high school students in five counties where NOVEC provides electric service — Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Prince William, Stafford, and in the City of Manassas Park.	$1,500	16 April	**https://www.novec.com/Community/scholarships.cfm** **Application opens 1 February.**
AMS Opportunity Scholarship Fund	Provides scholarships to graduating high school seniors in Northern Virginia.	$2,500	TBD	**https://www.cfnova.org/scholarship/ams-opportunity-scholarship-fund** **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline.**
Amin Family Scholarship	Provides scholarships to graduating students from Unity Reed High School intending to pursue a degree in healthcare.	(3) $5,000 per year	TBD	**https://www.cfnova.org/scholarship/amin-family-scholarship-fund** **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline. Typically released in January.**
NVTC Foundation Kilberg Scholarship	Benefits women pursuing higher education in STEM related fields.	$5,000	TBD	**https://www.cfnova.org/scholarship/nvtc-foundation-kilberg-scholarship-fund** **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline. Typically released in January.**
Elizabeth Koury Scholarship	Northern VA high school seniors who plan to enter the field of medicine.	$5,000 **Renewable**	TBD	**https://www.cfnova.org/scholarship/elizabeth-koury-scholarship-fund** **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline. Typically released in January.**
Vance International Scholarship	Open to students pursuing careers in law enforcement or security including the administration of justice.	$2,000	TBD	**https://www.cfnova.org/scholarship/vance-international-inc-scholarship-fund** **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline. Typically released in January.**

Scholarship Name	Description	Amount	Deadline	How To Apply
Psi Alpha Alpha Chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Bernie L. Bates Memorial Scholarship	College-bound, high school senior in Fairfax County or Arlington County.	Various Amounts	TBD	https://fairfaxcountyques.org/scholarship-application/ **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline. Typically released in January.**
Louise Lightner Jamison Teacher Scholarship	High school seniors residing in Prince William County who will advance their education through the pursuit of an undergraduate degree in the field of education.	$2,000	TBD	**https://www.cfnova.org/scholarship/louise-lightner-jamison-teacher-scholarship-fund** **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline. Typically released in January.**
Rose Koury Scholarship	Recognize outstanding Northern Virginia high school seniors who plan to enter the field of early childhood or elementary education.	$5,000 **Renewable**	17 March	**https://www.cfnova.org/scholarship/rose-koury-scholarship-fund** **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline. Typically released in January.**
Old Dominion (VA) Chapter, The Links Incorporated	Graduating 2027 Senior of Prince William County	Varies	TBD	**https://odclinks.org/scholarship.aspx** **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline.**
Pearlz of Zeta Scholarship	Provides financial assistance to students in pursuit of higher education.	$1,000-$3,000	TBD	**https://www.psiomicronzeta1920.org/pozitively-finer-foundation** **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline.**
The Ivy Foundation of Greater Prince William County Scholarship	Senior, male or female, graduating seniors from a high school in Prince William County, Manassas, or Manassas Park, VA	Varies	TBD	https://pwcivyfoundation.org/2026-scholarship/ **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline.**
The National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc. Prince William County Chapter Scholarship	Scholarships to 2027 graduating high school seniors.	(4) $1,000	TBD	Email scholarship@ncbwpwcc.org for more information or visit https://ncbwpwcc.org/programs/ **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline.**
The Traditional Ira Dorsey Scholarship Endowment Fund (IDSEF)	Male graduating high school senior who earned a GPA of 2.5 or better on 4.0 scale and plans to attend a four-year college or university.	$2,000-$5,000	31 March	Ira Dorsey Scholarship
The HBCU Ira Dorsey Scholarship	Graduating high school seniors, male and female, who have earned a GPA	$2,000-$5,000	31 March	Ira Dorsey Scholarship

Scholarship Name	Description	Amount	Deadline	How To Apply
Endowment Scholarship	of 3.0 or better on 4.0 scale and plan to attend an accredited four-year HBCU.			
First Mount Zion Baptist Church Scholarship	**2027 graduating seniors who are members of FMZBC and meet criteria outlined in the application.**	**TBD**	**1 April**	**https://firstmountzionbc.org/scholarships-2/**
Hinkitch Irvin Bell Memorial Scholarship	**2027 graduating seniors who are members of FMZBC and meet criteria outlined in the application.**	**TBD**	**1 April**	**https://firstmountzionbc.org/scholarships-2/**
Eula Dean Roby Scholarship	Awarded to students majoring in elementary education.	TBD	TBD	**https://deltafoundation.net/scholarship-internship-opportunities/ or send email to EulaDeanRobyScholarship@deltafoundation.net** **2027 Application available in November.**
The Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperative (VMDAEC) Scholarship	Award $1,000 scholarships to high school and home-schooled seniors whose parents or guardians are members of NOVEC.	$1,000	TBD	**https://vmdaec.com/scholarship/** **Application opens January 15, 2027**
Barbara Cornwell Memorial Scholarship	Graduating seniors from Unity Reed High School seeking an education beyond high school.	$5,000	TBD	**https://www.cfnova.org/scholarship/barbara-cornwell-memorial-scholarship-fund** **Monitor website for 2027 application deadline. Typically released in January.**
Dorothy Jean Coates Scholarship	Benefits nontraditional students enrolled in a college or university.	$1,000-$2,000	15 April	**https://www.cfnova.org/scholarship/dorothy-jean-coates-scholarship-foundation-fund**
Plein Environmental Scholarship	Scholarships to students in need of financial assistance who are pursuing a degree at NOVA or a VA public four-year university.	$5,000	24 April	**https://www.cfnova.org/scholarship/plein-environmental-scholarship-fund**
B&G Refrigeration Supporting STEM Scholarship	*Annual* scholarship for the spring and fall semester to support students involved in science, technology, engineering, and math focused fields of study.	$1,000	30 June	https://hoshizakiicemaker.com/stem-scholarship



First Mount Zion Academic Education Ministry (AEM)
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Mrs. Kim Crawford, Vice Chairman

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For additional information or questions, email us at aem@firstmountzionbc.org