

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEW GOSPEL FESTIVAL COMING TO POUGHKEEPSIE**

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY– A new, weekend-long festival celebrating gospel music will take place in Poughkeepsie on February 21 – 23, 2020. Dutchess Tourism President & CEO Mary Kay Vrba announced details of the Hudson Valley Gospel Festival 2020: *Ain't That Good News* today at the Majed J. Nesheiwat Convention Center.

This unique event that will honor the cultural and spiritual impact the gospel music genre has had on the world. Three City of Poughkeepsie venues will welcome attendees to the first-time festival. Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel and Conference Center and Changepoint Theater will host a series of workshops throughout the weekend, and Majed J. Nesheiwat Convention Center will host multiple headliner concert performances from Everett Drake, Pastor Edwrin Sutton and the Livingstone College Gospel Choir, with others to be announced. The event will also feature vendors selling choir-related merchandise, concert apparel and formal wear.

Everett Drake is a Nashville singer-songwriter and long-time vocalist for BET's Bobby Jones Gospel television show. A former member of the famed Johnson Ensemble, Drake has toured with artists representing a variety of music styles, including country's Lyle Lovett and Donna Fargo, and pop and R&B group New Kids On The Block.

Pastor Edwrin Sutton of Columbus County, North Carolina is an author musician, psalmist, songwriter and preacher. Throughout his career has shared the stage with many personalities and performers such as Dr. Jamal Bryant, Pastor Tracey Troy, Earnest Pugh, Shirley Murdock, Daryl Coley, Luther Barnes, Dorothy Norwood, Keith "Wonderboy" Johnson and KeKe Wyatt. On numerous occasions he has appeared as the featured preacher on The Word Network's television broadcasts.

The Livingstone College Gospel Choir from Salisbury, North Carolina, is a body of students who are dedicated to using the gift of music to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. The choir has performed with famed gospel artists Erica Campbell, Donnie McClurkin, James Fortune, Fred Hammond and many others.

3 NEPTUNE ROAD, SUITE A11A, POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK 12601-5500  
845/463-4000 • 800/445-3131 • [www.dutchesstourism.com](http://www.dutchesstourism.com)

Friday evening will kick off with a walk through history, exploring gospel music through time, followed by a headliner improv concert with adult and youth performances by local choirs and members of area congregations. Saturday will offer a diverse array of workshop sessions on both traditional and contemporary gospel with focuses on call and response, spoken word, shedding, open voice, visual arts, music direction, youth choir (ages 12-17) and drum and dance ministry, followed by a red-carpet headliner performance. Lastly, Sunday features brunch and a hat parade before a final concert.

To register for the event, visit [dutchesstourism.com](http://dutchesstourism.com) or [artsmidhudson.org](http://artsmidhudson.org).

Weekend passes include participation in workshops, admission to concert performances, and two meals. Special lodging packages are available for event attendees only on [pokgrand.com](http://pokgrand.com) using the promotion group code GOSPEL or by calling the hotel directly at 845-485-5300 and mentioning the event.

“The efforts of Dutchess Tourism, Inc. and Arts Mid-Hudson continue to improve the quality of life for residents and attract visitors to Dutchess County,” said Dutchess County Executive Marcus Molinaro. “The Hudson Valley Gospel Festival is a perfect example of the partnership and collaboration between these two organizations. They are constantly innovating to enrich our arts scene which, in turn, increases the important impact tourism has on our economy.”

“According to our [visitor profile survey](#), conducted in 2018, events such concerts and festivals are one of the top five reasons for a leisure trip to Dutchess County. Respondents to our survey also listed arts and culture as one of the top five important attributes a destination must have when selecting a getaway or vacation,” said Dutchess Tourism, Inc. President & CEO Mary Kay Vrba. “Hudson Valley Gospel Festival 2020 will attract new visitors to Dutchess and introduce them to our thriving arts scene.”

“Arts and culture events in the Mid-Hudson Valley attract 2.6 million day visitors and 1 million overnight visitors every year, according to a [2014 study](#) by The Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz, which yearly injects \$498 million directly into our region’s economy,” said Linda Marston-Reid, executive director of Arts Mid-Hudson. “In addition to its economic impact, the Valley’s unique arts culture enriches and strengthens its communities. Poughkeepsie’s ever-growing artist community is an ideal place for this first-time performing arts festival.”

Hudson Valley Gospel Festival 2020: *Ain’t That Good News* is presented by Dutchess Tourism Inc., Arts Mid-Hudson, and the HV Gospel Festival Committee: Ray Watkins, Linda Anderson, Linda Marston Reid, Shirley Adams, Eugena Carlisle, Janis Johnson, Elinor Levy, Carmen McGill, Rennle Raffington, and Sherre Wesley.

*Photo caption: Bethel Missionary Baptist Church Liturgical Dancers perform at a press conference announcing the festival on Wednesday, September 18, 2019 at the Majed J. Nesheiwat Convention Center.*

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**About Dutchess Tourism**

[Dutchess Tourism, Inc.](#) is the officially designated destination marketing organization for Dutchess County and is accredited by the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) of Destinations International. It is an independent 501c6 non-profit organization that works to bring tourism dollars to area businesses by marketing and promoting the assets of Dutchess County to the nation and the world. The office is located at 3 Neptune Road in the Town of Poughkeepsie with 18 Tourist Information Centers located around Dutchess County. Dutchess Tourism is partially funded by monies received from the County of Dutchess.

**About Arts Mid-Hudson**

[Arts Mid-Hudson](#) is the preeminent nonprofit arts service organization serving the Mid-Hudson region. The mission of Arts Mid-Hudson is to provide vision and leadership to support thriving and diverse arts in the Mid-Hudson Valley. Through our art partners, a diverse offering of arts and cultural programs, many free, attract a range of age groups and are produced across a broad geographic area.

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