

# *Living the Vision*

Health, Vitality, and Growth in  
African American Congregations



From the Black Congregational Enhancement Office  
Racial Ethnic Ministries Program Area  
National Ministries Division



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Formatted by Cecilia Amorocho Hickerson.



## *Preface*

The purpose of this resource is to motivate leaders of African American congregations to:

- develop a vision and plan for the growth of their congregation
- provide a few resource papers that could increase the effectiveness of ministries in African American churches and communities
- encourage leaders to make a deeper commitment to spiritual growth as they consider the growth of the church
- use resources to help in the visioning and planning process

The visioning and planning process suggested in this booklet is abbreviated. It is intended to motivate and help leaders get started. Leaders are encouraged to use a more detailed planning guide and a consultant at every stage of the process.

The resource papers provide a variety of ideas and suggestions on African American church development, worship, evangelism, community ministries, church growth, and racial justice. We are grateful to the authors for their contribution and permission to use their papers in this resource.

The spiritual growth of the leaders and members is the foundation of the health, vitality, and growth of congregations. We cannot share the good news of God's love if we do not consistently take the time to learn and experience it through Bible study, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines. Every congregation needs ministries that nurture the spiritual growth of leaders and members beyond the Sunday worship service and weekly offering of one Bible study. In addition to the Sunday worship experiences, people need a variety of entry points and choices for Bible study, prayer, and development of spiritual ministries.

Taking advantage of resources—both print and electronic—and a variety of skilled people can help leaders create and maintain growth-oriented ministries for their congregations and communities. Leaders also create opportunities to motivate members so that they respond to God’s call for them to identify, develop, and engage their gifts in ministry.



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## Introduction

The 208th General Assembly (1996) acknowledged the compelling need for an intentional churchwide strategy for racial ethnic church growth in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In 1998, the 210th General Assembly adopted the *Racial Ethnic/Immigrant Evangelism and Church Growth Report*. This report presented a four-fold strategy as a framework for a churchwide strategy for church growth. The components of this strategy address racial ethnic congregations, new immigrant communities of faith, multicultural congregations, and predominantly Anglo congregations. This churchwide effort makes it possible for every congregation to play a significant role in increasing the racial ethnic membership of the PC(USA).

### **A. The Importance of Increasing the Racial Ethnic Membership of the PC(USA)**

The theological and biblical statement in the *Racial Ethnic/Immigrant Evangelism and Church Growth Report* makes a case for diversity in the membership of the church. A few points from this statement are highlighted because of their relevance to African American congregations.

#### **1. The Universal Love of God**

“The church of Jesus Christ is built on the universal love of God and its power to transform people of every race, culture, and class into a community living together as the Household of God. . .” This is the essence of the message in both the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 25:16-20, Mark 16:14-18).

#### **2. The Call to Share the Good News of God’s Love**

The Great Commandment calls for “loving thy neighbor” as second only to loving God and the Great Commission sends the church to “go

and make disciples of all nations” proclaiming the good news to all creation. The call to share this universal gospel is intentional and direct. It is personal and corporate. It is an intuitive, joyful sharing that cannot be suppressed either by individuals or by the church community.

### **3. God Uses Racial Ethnic Churches**

God uses racial ethnic churches with culturally distinct ministries to help in reaching unchurched people. The Book of Acts reflects this type of ministry where the church speaks in the language of a particular culture (Acts 2:5-8). Today, this same kind of monocultural environment is evident in many communities in this nation—communities that exhibit the same kind of ethnic and racial identity as the churches portrayed in Acts. The churches of these communities are not closed to other cultures, but because of their context and/or their calling, they are oriented to particular cultural settings.

### **4. God Uses Multicultural Churches**

The United States is becoming increasingly multicultural, especially in its urban communities. Therefore, it is only right that the people of those communities be given the opportunity of affiliating with a congregation that presents the gospel within their cultural heritage and meets their particular needs. The Church of Jesus Christ can neither ignore or avoid responding to this growing national diversity. The challenge to all Christians is to learn how to share the gospel in an increasingly diverse culture, a culture that features a rich variety of languages, music, styles, ministries, witness, and modes of worship. This is particularly true of urban communities, and it is an increasingly visible reality in rural communities as well.

### **5. A Denomination That Celebrates and Empowers Cultural Diversity**

The PC(USA) must increase its efforts to be a denomination that respects, values, celebrates, and empowers cultural diversity in mission, ministry, and governance; a denomination where differences are not seen as inequalities or evidences of inferiority; a denomination that is a covenant of kinship where all profess Christ as Lord and Savior; a denomination that

sees evangelism as a reflection of personal and corporate faith, as well as a sacred witness for justice and peace; a denomination in which everyone can exercise her or his gifts as moved by the Holy Spirit in faith, hope, and love.

## ***B. The Call to African American Congregations***

African American congregations are called to share the gospel from the African American faith heritage and to contribute to the cultural diversity of the PC(USA). During the past five years, more African American congregations have experienced spiritual growth and increases in membership as they have become more involved in community ministries and engaged in efforts to reach out to those who are not members of their congregations. Several of these congregations' ministries are presented in the resource *Black Congregational Focus, Volume III, Growing African American Congregations*. PC(USA) leaders have had an opportunity to see some of the amazing things that can occur when congregational leaders decide to develop a vision and an action plan for growth. Read *Mission Considerations for African American Congregations, Reaching Beyond the Walls Through Friendship Evangelism*, and *Ten Points of Engagement in Racial Justice Ministry* in the Resources for Ministries section of this booklet.





# ***Developing a Vision for Your Congregation***

The material in this section is adapted from an *African American Congregational Redevelopment Consultation Report*. The leaders in this consultation identified the three states of health that could be found in African American congregations. The exercises in this visioning process will provide the best results when done by a group of leaders who could be named the visioning team. An individual, however, can benefit from reading and reflecting on these exercises.

A spiritual preparation period of at least thirty minutes will help leaders open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. It could include singing, prayer, Bible study, meditation, faith sharing, listening to God in silence, and other forms of spiritual preparation. This will increase the depth of your reflections and discussions. It also grounds your visioning in spiritual discernment and inspiration.

## ***A. Assessing the State of Your Congregation***

Read the following three states of congregational health and vitality. Reflect on each state and identify the signs that best describe your congregation. Add additional signs and create your own list.

### **1. Crisis**

#### **Signs of Crisis:**

- Low energy and unfulfilling worship experiences
- Declining participation in worship, Bible study, prayer, Sunday school, and other church programs
- Declines in membership and in financial and human resources
- Inability to maintain full-time pastoral leadership

- Low morale among members
- Apathy about evangelism
- Unwillingness to invite families and friends to visit
- No visible signs of pride about the African American heritage of leaders and their contributions
- Continuing conflict over minor things
- A tendency to remember the “good old days” and to do things “the way they have always been done”
- No vision or hope of change or growth
- No community ministries or outreach programs
- Disconnected from your church’s community and expressions of the African American religious heritage
- Little understanding and willingness to make relationships with the people, institutions, and social agencies in your church’s community
- Denial of African American identity and a superficial belief that all people are the same while holding an unexamined belief that European cultural and social norms are superior to African American norms as well as those of other cultures

What would your group add to this list?

## 2. Maintenance

### Signs of Maintenance

- A congregation financially stable enough to pay all its bills
- Sees the pastor as the spiritual leader and “minister” and the officers as the practical leaders and “ad-ministers”
- Low value assigned to the spiritual gifts and ministry of the members
- Little concern about creating new ministries to reach new people
- Too comfortable with the people who are already in church
- No sense of God’s call to share God’s love and goodness to those who do not know God

- Functioning below its potential
- Focuses on the needs of the institution instead of how the institution should serve the needs of people, preoccupation with structure rather than institution
- Pastor concerned with keeping peace and avoiding conflict
- Worship service usually more reflective of Eurocentric tradition
- Often focused on a middle class African American identity with no desire to be in relationship with marginalized people
- Increase in apathy and boredom
- Talk about growth, but no action to support the talk

What would your group add to this list?

### 3. Growth

#### Signs of Growth

- Leaders and members who show excitement and energy about their involvement in church activities
- Increase in worship attendance (the number of people attending worship is larger than the number of members in the church)
- Vibrant and touching worship services that enable people to experience God's presence (the music, prayers, and preaching acknowledge the African American tradition)
- Over-crowdedness in space and ministries
- New ministry opportunities in response to the needs of people and the community
- Members excited about discovering their gifts for ministry and the opportunity to share what God is doing in their lives
- A comprehensive Christian education program for all age groups that nurtures people in faith, spiritual growth, discipleship, and ministry
- More than 75 percent of the members are participants in some aspect of the Christian education program

- Lifestyles and symbols of the congregation that reflect an Afrocentric understanding of the gospel
- A comprehensive community outreach and ministry that demonstrates the transforming presence of the church in the form of housing, economic development, employment opportunities, financial management, health and wholeness, and other ministries that contribute to the transformation of people

What other signs would your group add to this list?

What name would your group give to the state of health, vitality, and ministry for your congregation?

Crisis? Maintenance? Growth? or \_\_\_\_\_?

Read the paper on *African American Church Development and Essentials for Growth* in the Resources for Ministries section.

Prayer: Hold a 15-minute group prayer session thanking God for your congregation, the ministry of assessment, and all the ways your congregation is blessed. Ask for God's guidance in developing a vision and plans for the future of your congregation.

## ***B. Signs of Readiness for Change***

Signs of readiness for change are embedded within every congregational state. Leaders must be prayerful in discerning these signs and skillfully using them as a foundation for growth. Identify the signs for change that are present in your congregation. Add additional signs that are not on this list.

- Consensus and acceptance of your congregation's condition
- Willingness to request guidance from your National Black Presbyterian Caucus Chapter, presbytery, synod, or General Assembly leaders
- Desire to learn more about your African American heritage and reaffirm your identity with the community (if the community is multicultural, there is a willingness to affirm other people's heritage and identity as well)
- An emerging new sense of call

- Increased emphasis on spiritual growth of leaders and members
- New expressions of hope, commitment, and care for people
- More leaders eager to participate in training and engage in ministry
- Desire for new ministries that make a difference in the lives of members and those in the community
- Growing spiritual hunger in the congregation
- Increased stewardship of finances, time, and talents
- Readiness to seize and create opportune moments for making your church visible and sharing your faith with unchurched persons

The greatest sign of readiness for change is the commitment of leaders to spiritual growth through worship, prayer, Bible study, and service. Leaders model for other members what it means to receive and share God's love. Read *Your Church Can Be an Acts 2:42-47 Church* in the Resources for Ministries section.

### ***C. Creating a Vision Statement for Your Congregation***

The vision we seek for our congregation is the way they will be when they are consistent with God's will in their particular communities. The vision connects the congregation with the will of God. The leaders are seeing and moving with the Holy Spirit. They have seen the truth that the reason their congregation is in its present state is because the leaders have become more self-serving than Christ serving. Christian leaders are called to follow Christ into all the world to share the good news of God's love with all people. A vision is both God-given and God-led. It connects us with the past, present, and future. It is positive and inspiring. It stretches and expands the minds and imaginations of leaders as well as members.

African American leaders from across the church worked together to develop a vision statement. It reflects their desire for an empowered African American Presbyterian witness. They developed the following vision statement. Congregational leaders may use it as a guide for developing a vision statement for their congregation.

## **A vision of health, vitality, and growth for African American Congregations**

African American congregations empowered by the Holy Spirit in the manner of Jesus of Nazareth will lead members and people outside of the church in a loving relationship with God, self, and neighbor through:

- culturally relevant worship and vibrant music ministries that express the faith convictions and actions of our ancestors
- a comprehensive learning program of Africentric Bible study, prayer, stewardship, faith heritage, community ministries, wholistic health practices, and service activities that help all grow in discipleship and ministry
- evangelism and justice strategies that help members share their love of God in ways that transform lives, political structures, and oppressive traditions
- a joyful, nurturing, healing and welcoming community lifestyle of fellowship, love, and celebration that empowers children, youth, and young adults, and older adults

### **D. Planning for Growth**

It is often a good idea to seek the help of a church growth leader at the beginning of your planning process. These leaders have been through the process and can help you make the most effective use of all of your resources. Use the Presbyterian connectional system to find the right resource person for you. You can share your vision statement and your journey with your resource person. Visioning, planning, and evaluation is an ongoing cycle.

We ask you to share your vision statement and initial plans with the following:

- Your local chapter of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus or Regional Representative
- The Office of Black Congregational Enhancement

Read *African American Church Development* in the Resources for Ministry section.



## *Resources for Ministries in Your Congregation*

The following resources on ministry are offered for your reflection as you consider improving your ministry offerings:

- 1. African American Presbyterian Church Development*
- 2. Worship in African American Congregations*
- 3. Essentials for Growth*
- 4. Mission Considerations for African American Churches*
- 5. Reaching Beyond the Walls through Friendship Evangelism*
- 6. You Can Be an Acts 2:42-47 Church*
- 7. Community Recruitment/Survey Form*
- 8. Ten Points of Engagement in Racial Justice*



# *African American Presbyterian Church Development*

*Rev. Kermit E. Overton*

*Former Pastor of First African Presbyterian Church  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

History shows that African Americans were not considered full members and were mistreated in White Presbyterian congregations; therefore, they sought to organize their own churches while remaining in the denomination. In different places, groups of people had been captured by the gospel and influenced by Presbyterianism. In the North and South, African Americans developed their own congregations. This pattern was altered after the Civil War. In the 1870s and 1880s there was a phenomenal development of African American congregations in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The development was less remarkable in some of the other southern states. This proliferation of church development was due to the efforts of the Board of Freedmen of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Along with the development of a worshiping community, a school was usually established for children. In the early stages, the congregations and schools were administered by White Presbyterians. As African Americans were educated, they eventually assumed leadership of the congregations and schools.

Other churches were developed through the work of Sunday school missionaries. These missionaries were lay and clergy African American Presbyterians, who traveled to rural areas and set up Sunday church schools. As these schools grew, a minister was placed over them and they were organized into churches.



In some of the northern cities, the well-established congregations were willing to bring the Presbyterian witness to other African

American communities. They did so by establishing their own “mission stations.” An example of this was found among some of our Philadelphia congregations, such as Berean, which grew into an independent, self-supporting congregation.

Sometime after World War II, our denomination devised the New Church Development program. This was designed to help our presbyteries organize new congregations in residential areas. The new communities, for the most part, had a strong economic base. As new churches were developed in these areas, the new members were able to construct a building and meet the financial demands of the program. The vast majority of these areas were White communities. African Americans received very little benefit from this program.

The 1960s ushered in another era of proliferation of African American churches. This was the period of “white flight” in cities from Boston to San Diego and from Seattle to Miami. Thriving White Presbyterian congregations found themselves in the midst of rapidly changing neighborhoods. As members moved, they also moved their membership. Some congregations merged with other Presbyterian churches in White communities. There were some congregations that remained even after White pastoral leadership had departed. Their intentions in doing so is not at issue here, but it is important to note that their presence gave these congregations the image of being a white church in an increasingly African American population. These congregations eventually became African American by forfeit. The denomination has yet to develop an adequate strategy or policy to deal with this practice, which still continues. Various presbyteries have poured money into these churches with the hope that they can be turned around, but they have not understood the human dynamics created by this kind of situation.

### **A. Church Image: Enhancement and/or Obstacle**

“Is church image important?” The answer to this question is obvious. For African Americans image is even more important. The church is the first thing that we claim as our institution. It matters a great deal how the building looks; how the church is seen by the community; how friendly it is; how real the minister preaches; and various other criteria. African Americans like to boast about their church.

A survey revealed that most of the congregations have struggled with the question of image as part of their witness to the community. It starts with the appearance of the building and tells what goes on inside. The successful transitional churches have worked effectively to create an image of an Afrocentric, revitalized congregation. The greatest enhancement of the image of the churches surveyed is the worship and the mission to the community. Details of this follow below.

## **B. Developing Ministry and Mission**

Ministry means “service,” just as minister means “servant.” The church as the body of Christ is also a servant. The church, however, has to be taught to serve and to be empowered to serve. This is a process of equipping and it is the church’s ministry (service) to itself initially.

“Mission” gives the direction to where the service ultimately is to take place. Mission takes place beyond the walls of the building to a broken, sinful world; to places of injustices; to the poor and distressed; and to wherever God calls. Mission drives God’s people out into the world to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ in all areas of life. The mandate to develop ministry and mission in a congregation looms large before every session in every church.

It is important to note that the more successful churches started with a ministry of strengthening the membership. A significant factor in this is developing an Afrocentric identity through the study of African and African American religious history. Strong biblical preaching, Bible study and leadership training are other ingredients included in this ministry. Ministry should always be done with an eye toward community needs and issues. Some churches develop their ministry and mission concurrently. The following are some elements of ministry that strengthen churches and increase their effectiveness:

### **1. Worship**

Good, solid, biblical preaching on relevant issues using illustrations and examples from African and African American histories and cultures.

A good mixture of music that speaks to all age groups, with an emphasis on African American music (spirituals and/or gospel).

Involve a wider range of people in worship; choirs to sing different music (including youth choir); different ages to serve as liturgists; “altar” calls to commitment; express a sense of care for persons during the “concerns of the church”/announcements/pastoral moment.

## **2. Christian Education**

Sunday school teachers are trained and given a new vision; they contract to serve for a limited period, which produces a better response in recruitment efforts.

Develop a more flexible educational program; schedule classes to best accommodate members; explore more relevant educational materials.

Enhance Bible study through cell groups.

Establish issue-oriented study groups for members involving nonmembers as well.

Provide for officer training (by pastor, presbytery, or on-the-job training).

Sponsor African American cultural programs (history, art, and drama) throughout the year.

## **3. Evangelism**

Teach members the mandate of evangelism (not just for church growth but also for spiritual growth). Evangelism is not the work of a committee only, but the ministry of the entire church.

Good preaching is an effective tool of evangelism.

Pastoral influence during counseling, involvement in the community and other public appearances enhances evangelism.

Friendship evangelism at work: members are encouraged to invite their unchurched friends and family to church and to reach out to other people who have problems.

Establish community programs that emerge from and are responsible to the needs and interest of church members and community.

Identify and use evangelism resources written by and for African

American churches.

#### 4. Stewardship

Preach boldly on tithing to bring good results.

Encourage tithing in various ways.

Challenge members to increase their giving by the vision of their ministry and mission.

Teach members the spiritual blessing of giving.

In all the cases of “success,” there is strong, enabling pastoral leadership along with committed lay leadership. The mission activity of the churches, for the most part, is determined by assessing the needs of the community. This is done in various ways.

Examples:

A church had a series of forums by bringing in political leaders who made decisions about the community. This enabled community people to focus on critical issues that affected them. The church then involved itself in those issues.

Another church discovered the community population makeup from demographic materials to determine which programs could best serve the area. Other churches were able to follow these materials to guide them in determining their mission.

Many churches provide day care service through a public funded program. Most of them have tutorial programs after school. There are African American cultural programs—mainly for children. Programs for senior citizens are being developed.

Many of the programs seem strongest where members of the congregation engage in ministry with the community where needed. Indeed, some of the churches involve neighborhood volunteers who may be in need of the services offered by the church, they become participants as well as recipients and learn that they have something to offer.

Leadership plays a key role in the effective implementation of mission

programs. The mission of these churches project a friendly and caring attitude to the community. This becomes fertile ground for inviting people to share in a warm worship experience.

## 5. Lay Leadership

There is a variety of attitudes and styles among lay leaders. In older congregations, it is natural that traditions are more entrenched. Some older leaders see their role as preserving those traditions. Furthermore, they have learned the system of the local congregation well and do not want it changed. They derive much power and satisfaction by managing the system and will, therefore, fight against any change.

Many of our presbyteries do not understand the historic dynamics of transitional churches in changing neighborhoods. Most of the African Americans who joined the failing White congregations that remained wanted to be part of an integrated church. This was during the period of civil rights. Then the slogans shifted to “Black is beautiful” and “self-determination.” These cries were being heard in communities surrounding many of our transitional churches. African Americans were building their own power and control and being “good Presbyterians,” which meant becoming irrelevant to the community. It was almost impossible to build a congregation in such a situation even with strong African American pastoral leadership. In many instances, there was strong resistance to change on the part of the lay leadership. The present dynamics are much the same, even when a community changes from middle class African American to poorer African Americans. The “good Presbyterians” adapted the same attitude toward the poorer African Americans as the white church did toward them.

In thriving congregations, pastors report persons ages 25 to 45 are willing to take on the responsibility of leadership because they are catching a vision of an Afrocentric church that is relevant and meets the needs of the community. They are anxious to use their God-given and acquired skills to promote and support their ministries.

## 6. Pastoral Leadership Styles

Each pastor has his/her own leadership style. Style is dictated by one’s personality and natural gifts. Through commitment to Jesus Christ, these

personalities and natural gifts become God's gift to the church. Some characteristics of such leadership styles are:

**An aggressive pursuit of a task:** This builds enthusiasm in those who follow; the result is that it pulls people.

**Visionary:** Helps coworkers to see new and greater possibilities; the vision motivates people to act.

**Theological approach:** Shows how the mandate to act is related to our faith; it requires deep spirituality.

**Enabler:** Challenges members to do a job and equips them to do it.

**Example:** Demonstrates compassion, faith, commitment, and integrity.

**Good preacher:** Informs and develops spirituality.

**Good pastor:** Goes beyond personal involvement in providing care for the flock.

The reality is that several of these styles, in combination, characterize a successful pastor. Leadership style can be the thing that adds a "special something" to one's ministry, but nothing can replace hard work, sacrifice, dedication, continual study, and a genuine love for our Lord and for people.

### C. Guiding Principles for African American Church Development

#### 1. Where change and growth take place, skillful pastoral leadership causes it to occur.

- With this leadership, marginal and dependent churches can overcome a survival mentality and become self-supporting and strong.



- African Americans, Presbyterians among them, seek an Afrocentric religious experience: Where pastors and sessions are providing it—churches are growing.
  - African Americans can be attracted to the Presbyterian Church.
- 2. Presbytery leaders must become knowledgeable about what is needed to build strong African American congregations.**
- African Americans will not be won by waving a Presbyterian banner but rather by what a church is doing both on the inside and the outside of its building.
  - Presbyteries in consultation with African American leaders must devise a strategy for dealing with transitional churches.

# ***Worship in African American Congregations***

*by Dr. Melva Wilson Costen*

*Johnson C. Smith/Interdenominational Theological Center*

*Atlanta, Georgia*

African American Christians when gathered and engaged in worship, regardless of denominations, share many things in common. First and foremost, the central shared focus of the gathering is the urgent need to respond holistically and joyfully in praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to Almighty God in Jesus the Christ, and to be spiritually fed and nurtured by the Word of God. Under the power of the Holy Spirit, African Americans express and celebrate their corporate and personal belief that God the Creator enters fully into human conditions, restoring, redeeming, liberating, forgiving, and sustaining life. In the context of the corporate community of faith, African Americans understand their uniqueness as persons—as individuals—within and at one with God and the whole body of Christ. Since God takes the initiative in calling the body of Christ together, the community is able to reconnect with their African-oriented understanding and their lived experiences, which affirm: “I am because we are; because we are, therefore I am.” In such a hospitable spirit-filled and emotionally freeing environment, each person, as well as the corporate community, is equipped for worship and for service in the community.

Secondly, African American worshipers share the reality of common historical roots that extend deep into the nurturing center of Africa’s “notoriously religious” soil. These roots provide fundamental primal worldviews that allow a connection between ways of knowing and experiencing God with holistic means of living and surviving in oppressive, racist societies. Some branches of the African heritage include direct involvement in the shaping of Hebrew and Judeo-Christian worship traditions. From the time Abraham came out of Ur and settled in Egypt, through the Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch, through the time when the church wrestled with the formulation of theological statements and the shaping of creed, Africa has played a critical role. Through careful research, African Americans can now claim history that has not always

been acknowledged throughout Christendom. In addition to the heritage of the Ethiopian and Egyptian Coptic churches, African Americans have reclaimed and now share the contributions of prominent Western Church leaders such as Augustine, Clement, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Athanasius, and Cyril.

A third reality shared by African American worshipers is their peculiar social history created by the enslaving and transporting of African people to the Americas and the brutal forms of human bondage that gave birth to African American congregations and denominations. The common struggle for survival and human decency continued through the Middle Passage (from the West Indies to North America) and led to the creation of the “Invisible Institution” where African Americans could respond to God of “all times and places” in secrecy. Their African primal heritage empowered them to “make a way out of no way,” risking their lives in the process of responding to God’s “call to meeting in the wilderness.” Herein can be found the origin of the unique ritual language, symbols, customs, and religious expressions that shaped, and continue to shape African American worship. Worship continually provides a space where Black folks can totally bring themselves, strip themselves of false pretenses and all other encumbrances and lay self and all on God’s altar.

Worshipers share a repertoire of spirituals created spontaneously “out of the stuff of their lived experiences,” as well as an ever-unfolding repertoire of Gospel songs. Praise choruses and instrumental accompaniments accentuate the uniqueness of African American worship. This is facilitated and enhanced by soulful preaching and fervent praying in the style of African griots, with hope, faith, and trust that God hears and answers prayers. Elements of “liturgical freedom” in the early “Invisible Institution” continue today in spirit-filled bodily movement (shouting and dancing), call and response dialogue between the preacher and other leaders of worship. Worship is celebrative responses of the community to what God has done, is doing, and will do. Yet, worshipers are FREE to determine their responses to the Word of God and to the active presence of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be assumed that ALL worshipers will respond with jubilation. There is also a response of silence, reflective listening, and contemplation, which is often transported into action as mission and ministry in the

world. This becomes an extension of worship. Where freedom was and IS denied African Americans in society, worshipers are free to anticipate and to use the diversity of spiritual gifts available in each local congregation.

A final shared reality is systemic racism of the American society, which is alive in the twenty-first century. Separate worship will continue in order to accommodate the spiritual needs of African Americans in an ongoing oppressive American society. With the emergence of “Black theology” and vigorous scholarly research there is acknowledgment of the unique differences in theological thinking that undergirds and helps contextualize African American worship. While there are shared histories in the origin of what is considered “African American worship,” it is clear that congregational contexts and faith experiences are different and have always differed according to the responses of the people in particular contexts.

## **Basic Elements and Practices**

### **1. The Word of God in Scripture**

The Word of God in Scripture sets the momentum for all elements (acts) of worship and is the determining factor for the theme, season of the Christian year (when followed), as well as the flow of the service. Congregational song often flows spontaneously after the sermons, leading to the invitation or an “Altar Call.” For African Americans, the preached word is the central means of bringing “a word from the Lord.”

### **2. Music Is Integral to the Entire Worship Service and Should Be Understood as Supportive for Other Elements and Facilitate the Flow**

- a. Carefully chosen and performed, music is the conduit from the heart of God to the soul of the people, especially in communal singing!
- b. Although the ability to improvise is an asset, musicians should be able to read the musical score, so that congregational singing can be enhanced.
- c. Musicians should be sensitive to appropriate times for complete silence. Background music to support words can block or confuse the gift of communal listening. Music is more persuasive than words.

d. God is to be praised with instruments! New occasions (and new technology) teach helpful ways that God can be praised. African Americans have always encouraged the development of musical gifts of its members.

### **3. A Variety of Song Forms**

Music leaders must be intentional about the use of a wide variety of congregation forms that the Christian church has inherited from the seventeenth through the twenty-first centuries. The forms include spirituals (jubilees and praise songs), improvised hymnic forms (metered and line hymns), anthems, gospel songs, praise songs, hymns from hymnals, and other forms of congregational singing. Choirs have been used in African American congregations since the early 19th century. They are often identified and named according to the form or style of music preferred, such as inspirational choir, anthem choir, hymn singers, shaped-note singers, and gospel singers.

### **4. Prayer Continues to Be a Source of Strength**

Prayer provides a means of spiritual and emotional release and fulfillment. Just as with traditional preaching, the manner of praying and the use of familiar metaphoric language reflects the oral tradition of the West African heritage. The reverent attitude assumed by the one who prays in this tradition exemplifies the deep-rooted faith and ongoing divine encounter uniquely expressed by oppressed people. The one leading in prayer brings the entire congregation to the “full spiritual” fountain where all stand together as “empty pitchers before all a full fountain just waiting to be filled!” One person’s “little talk with Jesus” assures the community that “everything is going to be all right, because God is always on time.” Prayer printed in bulletins have little appeal because spontaneity is one of the tests of spiritual authenticity.

### **5. Invitation to Discipleship (Opening the Doors of the Church)**

Seldom is a worship service concluded without an opportunity for persons to make a public profession of their faith, whether for the first time or as a sinner moved to conversion as a result of the service.

## **6. Responding to God's Incarnational Presence in Jesus the Christ Can Lead to Positive Self-Image, Reconciliation, Wholeness, and Healing**

African American worshipers in this millennium continue to learn, grow, and make sense of God's gift in every age as appropriate means for responding to God's amazing grace. Because God is, we are and our work in worship is expressive of our mission in God's world.

# **Essentials for Church Growth**

*Rev. Dr. Mark Lomax*

*First African Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Georgia*

*Isaiah 6:1-8; Luke 4: 16-22*

## **The Essential Grounds:**

### **Prayer**

The pastor, leaders, and members must make a commitment to pray for one another and their ministry on a regular basis. Prayer is a foundation for all the ministries of the congregation. African Americans have a strong belief that “prayer changes things.” In addition to infusing prayer into every activity, establish a group prayer ministry that meets regularly.

### **Preaching**

Pastors must attend to their preaching. There are three rules:

1. Sermons must be relevant to the lived experience of the congregation.
2. Sermons must be biblically based, theologically sound, and mission sensitive.
3. Sermons must be delivered with energy and excitement. People will never warm to something the preacher is cool about.

### **Singing**

Singing must be inclusive of all genres of Black sacred music—spirituals, gospels, hymns, etc. Extra care should be given to the selection of musicians. Some principles:

1. Pastors and worship chairpersons must spend time cultivating a relationship with the primary musician—sharing the vision, identifying resources for music ministry.
2. Music on Sunday must be relevant to the lived experiences of the congregation, as well as those whom the congregation is trying to reach.
3. Music should underlie prayer, announcements, and transitions from one part of the liturgy to another.



### **Fellowship**

Meals should be offered to the congregation on a fairly frequent basis. Black folk enjoy table fellowship as much as the Bible folk did.

1. Session can offer a light meal before mid-week Bible study.
2. There ought to be two or three potluck meals each year. Suggestions include Memorial Day Weekend, Men's/Women's Day, Church Anniversary.

### **The Essential Rhythm:**

African American Life and Culture—The African American community has a rhythm, an ebb and flow of activity. Typically Sunday worship is at the 11:00 o'clock hour; Bible study is intergenerational and conducted on Wednesday evenings by the pastor. Choir rehearsals take place on Thursday evenings or Saturday. Get in step with the rhythms of your community. Discuss questions such as:

What is on the mind of the people where our church is located?

How do we speak to those issues from a biblical perspective?

How do we interpret those issues theologically?

In what ways can we engage the community around significant/pressing needs?

### **The Essential Content:**

Bible-based sermons, Bible studies, and committee meetings should be based in Scripture. The Bible should be utilized as a primary point of reference even when a congregation's primary orientation is in the direction of the *Book of Order*.

1. Offer leader development time during board meetings.
2. Establish time for all key leaders in the church to meet on a regular basis just to pray and study the Word.
3. Equip ministry chairs to teach Scripture prior to ministry meetings.
4. Assure that children of the church are exposed to key Bible texts.

### *Liberation-Oriented*

Whether or not they want to acknowledge it, African Americans feel the pressures of living in American society. Apply a liberation critique to Scripture and ministry.

1. Highlight the lives of activist Presbyterians like Edward Wilmont Blyden, Henry Highland Garnett, Lucy Craft Laney, and Gayraud Wilmore.
2. Frequently incorporate justice issues into sermons, Bible studies, conversations.
3. Recognize that African American participation in the higher judicatories of the church are purposeful activities—elders should be properly briefed/equipped for participation.
4. Be determined to make a difference in the community where the church is located.

### *Pastorally Sensitive*

Boldly address the emotional, psychological, spiritual, and relational wounds represented in your congregation and the community where it is located. Frequently focus on the cure rather than on the illness.

1. Offer a series of sermons on relationships.
2. Offer congregation and community seminars and workshops on grieving, male-female relationships, giving, HIV/AIDS.
3. Address issues like divorce, single-parenting, and aging.

4. Open the church to youth in the community, neighborhood associations, political forums, after-school programs, etc.

*Mission-Focused*

The more a congregation is engaged in ministry and mission, the less likely members will have time to be in conflict with the pastor. Develop a mission focus in conjunction with formal and informal leaders in the congregation, take all the time needed to teach the mission, and equip the saints for ministry by organizing around the mission of the church.

# **Mission Considerations for African American Congregations**

*Rev. Dr. Marsha Snulligan-Haney*

*Professor of Missiology and Religions of the World*

*Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia*

As African American Presbyterian congregations seek to be faithful within today's complex and challenging contexts, we are faced with at least five challenges.

## **1. Multiculturalism**

The challenge of multiculturalism to most African American congregations is most evident in urban areas where congregations find themselves existing in communities and sharing social space with persons of other ethnic groups. The plurality within the African American neighborhoods in Los Angeles, New York City, Houston, and any number of urban centers finds the presence of several Caribbean nationalities, various Hispanic ethnic groups, Samoa Americans, and various Asian cultures. While racial tensions are often reported, Latinos and African Americans have a long history of peaceful coexistence. Since 1965, when laws restricting immigration were liberalized, intentional cross-cultural ministry has become a concern for African American congregations, who now find themselves as the minorities in the midst of rapidly changing multicultural neighborhoods. The desire to reach out to persons of other cultures within the immediate church community can result in the following: leaders of African American congregations attempting to learn a new language; offering educational classes in English as a second language; Alcoholic Anonymous classes and resources for other addictions; providing free hot meals; making meeting space available for Ethiopians, Koreans, and others; and offering other social services for undocumented workers and other newly arriving immigrants. In addition, African American Presbyterian congregations can participate in community programs that foster understanding and unity.

## **2. Diversity among African American Presbyterians**

The theological diversity within African American Presbyterianism challenges the church to embrace many ways of existing as faith communities. The state of crisis facing the African American community (see the latest report of the Urban League) is the result of social, spiritual, physical, and psychological realities that threaten the very fabric of a strong self-identity and communal life. In reality, the crisis requires the spiritual leadership to work in partnership to address critical issues that face congregations located on almost every corner in some urban centers. Many of the problems facing the African American community are too complex to be addressed by any single type of congregation or faith community and suggest the development of Afrocentric and creative ministries (such as ethnic schools) that are created and developed by congregations in response to local needs. Their mission would be to bring healing, hope, and wholeness to the people in their midst. The incorporation of an African American worldview, historical and social perspectives, and contemporary thoughts in educational, informational, and other resources developed for appropriate and relevant evangelism and outreach is crucial.

## **3. Classism**

There is the increasing bifurcation of the African American community into two main class divisions: a “coping” sector of middle-income working class and middle class African American communities, and a “crisis” sector of poor African American communities made up of the working poor and the dependent poor. The class divisions, for most practical purposes, are growing, and due to the changing demographics of middle class African Americans, the inner cities have become the home of the poor who are physically and socially isolated.

African American Presbyterians must address the issue of classism in our theology, church, and society. It is a reality that economics (largely) determines our ethics and influences our theology and that class is determined by economics. As the economic pie is cut into smaller pieces in order to serve the growing needs of more racial and ethnic groups, the dissatisfaction and anger of those who feel disinherited and disenfranchised

become more obvious. The implications of this greatly affect the witness of congregations within their immediate communities.

#### ***4. Economic Issues***

Other concerns of the African American churches are economic development and economic justice issues. While it is a basic premise that one's social location affects one's perception of how reality is perceived, without a strong spiritual system of beliefs, it is easy for a church's highest motivation to become economics. At the same time, economic needs of people must be acknowledged and addressed within the context of the realm and presence of God's kingdom and God's concern for the whole personhood.

Some African American Presbyterian churches are providing models of Christian economic development and indicate how congregations have begun to launch economic redevelopment projects for their communities. Church members are learning what they can accomplish within local communities when their monies are pooled together in order to provide much needed jobs, businesses, shopping centers, and senior citizen housing.

The African American Presbyterian Church has done much to contribute to the growth and development of the middle class and stands as a reminder that religion and faith are important also to the professional African Americans. The Black church continues to be a place of "safe harbor and spiritual refueling" for many. For persons who live and work in predominantly white communities, it is important that their children have ties to the Black community through the church. Even when the young people who often drifted away from the church as young adults (perhaps experimented with other religious faiths such as Islam, Eastern philosophies, and African ideologies, in addition to traditional religions), later return to the church, they do so with a new understanding and appreciation for that church.

#### ***5. Pluralism and Gender Inclusivity***

The concern about gender has created a two-pronged challenge for African American churches, internally and externally. Today women in the ordained ministry face many of the same problems they did years ago.

Women called by God to leadership in the church, in the preaching and teaching ministries of the church, pose a challenge (and in some cases a threat) to many of the predominantly African American male church leadership and ministerial organizations. While issues such as biblical support for the ordination of women and the appropriate use of spiritual gifts that women bring to ministry are not raised, the reality of reluctance to recognize and allow women to share as full partners in ministry remains, despite the fact that women (the elderly, widows, wives, others, and single women) continue to constitute the overwhelming majority of church support and membership, and despite the proven positive record of pioneer female clergy. While leadership needs within the church focus on the need for more women in leadership positions, outside of the churches the impact of economics, political factors, quality health care, and other issues related to women, particularly the feminization of poverty, and the reality of single mothers heading single-parent families, can scarcely be overlooked in any realistic appraisal by those concerned about the mission of the church. Is the church, like the example of Jesus, ministering in such a way as to present the full gospel as good news to women, or will it, like the culturally accepted attitudes of Jesus' day, be used to simply maintain the status quo?

## ***6. African American Presbyterian Congregations and Global Missions***

It has been important to African American Presbyterian congregations to build bridges cross-culturally with Africans on the continent both for evangelization and political purposes. While Presbyterians Marie Fearing and William and Lucy Sheppard represent a few of the early African American missionaries who participated in cross-cultural missions to Africa at the turn of the twentieth century, pastors such as Henry Highland Garnett used their pulpit, and David Walker, his newspaper business, to promote consciousness and sensitivity to responsibilities toward Africa.

In addition, relationships with Africans, as well as with persons from the Caribbean, Jamaicans, Haitians, Cubans, and others from the formerly British West Indies, Afro-Brazilians, Afro-Belizians, and Afro-

Nicaraguans and other people of African descent, have always been important. Although the percentage of Black Presbyterians in the denomination, 2.7 percent, does not reflect this diversity, a closer examination of members of African American Presbyterian congregations will often reflect this diversity in church memberships. Since the late nineteenth century, a growing concern for all persons of the African Diaspora has evidenced itself in the concept of Pan Africanism, and in better relations between Africans and African Americans. The learnings of the most recent global and cross-cultural experiences are made real in local congregations where church members who participate are encouraged to engage in mission interpretation in the church and community.



## ***Reaching Beyond the Walls through Friendship Evangelism***

*Rev. Dr. Edward Davis*

*Pastor of St. Albans Presbyterian Church, St. Albans, New York*

The church and we as individuals are called to be Christ's faithful evangelist, according to our *Book of Order* G-3.0300. We are called to be God's Good News people, prepared to carry out the three-fold mission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Church Universal and our local church should be guided by:

- 1) The Great Commandment to Love (Matt. 22:37-40)
- 2) The Great Commission to Go (Matt. 28:19-20)
- 3) The Great Commandment to Serve (Matt. 25:34-36)

Evangelism is defined for us in Matthew 28:18-20 in which God commissions disciples to go into all the world and teach, preach, and share the good news. Evangelism is giving the Word of God to those who are dead in their trespasses and sins in order that they might be born again through the power and love of Jesus Christ (John 3:1-7, 16-17). Every Christian is commanded to share the gospel. We have no choice. The question we must ask is: How can I best share the gospel? Where does God want me to share the gospel? (Matt. 28:18-2, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8, Acts 20:24).

Christ was our greatest example. He loved people, wanted to be with people, and served people. He was called a friend of publicans and sinners (Luke 7:34). On nineteen different occasions Jesus taught on a one-on-one basis. He taught a man sitting under a tree and a tax collector at his office. He taught a prostitute at a well and raised Lazarus from the grave. He called fishermen from the sea and while dying on the cross, he gave a thief the promise of paradise. After his resurrection, he confronted Saul on the road to Damascus. Jesus said that he came to seek and save that which was lost.

## Friendship—A Basic Evangelism Tool

### A Definition of Friendship (Luke 7:34–50, Luke 15:1–2)

As we look out in our world today, there are many people who have been rejected, marginalized, and ostracized. These are the very people we as Christians must reach and whose individual needs we must discover:

- 1) the isolated
- 2) the lonely
- 3) the friendless

- The first step in reaching beyond the walls is to be sensitive and compassionate for those in need (Matt. 25:35).
- The second step is to commit oneself to the task (Luke 5:18). Church-going can no longer be a socially acceptable weekly practice. Our goal, however, must be to meet people and their needs and to understand where they are hurting. Our task is to reach out beyond our church walls to reach people in Christian love and befriend them for Christ.
- The third step is to meet needs creatively (Luke 5:19). As we look around our communities we could easily be discouraged with the decay and difficult situations. The difficulties should not lead us to discouragement but to Christ and creativity (Prov. 29:18).

## Acts of Friendship Evangelism

(Acts 3:1-10)

### Characteristics of an Evangelist

If you desire to do evangelism in the power of the Holy Spirit, these are some important traits to cultivate.

*Love:* To do evangelism in the power of the Holy Spirit you need to have first experienced the love of God. The next step is to express the love of God. Love is the first fruit of the Holy Spirit. Love grows as we have deep and vital vine intimacy with Jesus. Such a closeness produces Jesus' love for others in us.

*Linger:* Take time. Spirit-led evangelism is time-consuming and for this reason so few are involved. Jesus took time with the Samaritan woman at

Jacob's well in John 4. He took time to go down to Zacchaeus' home in Luke 19. Philip took time away from a great citywide crusade for one person.

*Longing for Lost:* Develop a deep God-given burden for the lost and a broken heart for those that are broken. Of many things lacking in our evangelism today this absence may be the one of most concern. Love is our primary motive, but the eternity that people face can engender love and it should.

*Listen:* Spirit-led evangelism has God's ear to hear the deep needs. Read John 4 and list the things you see about Jesus' listening skills. As we listen with the Spirit's ears, we will know what is being said, what to say, and when to say it. Study Jesus' approach to Nicodemus in John 3.

*Lead:* Spirit-led evangelism leads people to decision. We do this by telling our story, using Scripture, and praying. Lead gently and humbly. Lead with kindness and an awareness of the deep pains of the individual. Lead with sensitivity.

### **Sharing Friendship Scriptures**

Romans 6:23

John 3:16–17

Romans 10:9–10

John 1:12

2 Cor. 5:17

John 10:10

1 Thess. 4:13–18



## ***Your Church Can Be an Acts 2:42–47 Church***

*Rev. Dr. Alford Branch*

*Holmes Chapel Presbyterian Church, Monticello, Arkansas*

I believe that any church that really wants to be a viable church within their community can be if there is commitment and cooperation between the pastor and session. I believe this because it happened to a small church in Monticello, Arkansas.

Thirteen years ago Holmes Chapel Presbyterian Church was a 100 percent African American congregation with 18 to 20 people in attendance at worship services, which were held twice each month. It is in a town in southeast Arkansas with a population of about 7,000 people. Currently there are 8,100 in the town. One-fourth of the current population is African American. Currently, we average 200-plus people each week, with more than 250 people on the roll. Several people other than African American are in attendance weekly. The church is currently averaging an increase of 20 percent annually in membership. Currently, 40 percent of the membership is age 30 and younger.

This revitalization did not occur overnight, but constant commitment and cooperation between the pastor, session, and other members made this a reality. There are five strategic areas of ministry that were helpful to us, which can be found in Acts 2:42–47. They were implemented over a period of time. The commitment and cooperation must begin with planning and developing a mission statement, and developing ministry around that statement. Our mission statement is “to love both God and humans, worship in spirit and in truth, declare the gospel, equip the saints, promote unity through fellowship, use our collective gifts to share and care for others.” The following are ministry areas developed around fulfilling our mission statement: worship, fellowship, ministry of ministry, financial stewardship, evangelism, and discipleship.

# Five Strategic Areas of Ministry for Church Growth

## 1. Ministry of Worship

- Greeters
- Parking assistants
- Music and choirs
- Worship participation
- Revivals
- Intercessory prayer team
- Worship leaders
- Preaching
- Youth church/services
- Prayers for people



## 2. Ministry of Fellowship

- Special trips for youth
- Church picnics
- Lock-ins for youth
- Dramatic plays
- Zoo and plays
- Older adult ministries
- Special award recognition
- Sporting events
- Annual church events
- Bowling, skating
- Swimming pool party
- Special luncheons
- Graduates/Parents' day
- Fellowship with other churches

### **3. Ministry of Ministry (a church's ministry should be designed around the community's needs and informed by them)**

- Survey of target community/people
- Survey form used for evangelistic opportunities
- Male/Female mentoring
- Substance abuse education seminars
- Violence prevention seminars
- Single-parenting seminars
- Health education seminars
- Civic groups' use of facilities
- College campus ministry
- After-school tutorial programs
- Financial stewardship agencies to provide seminars
- First-time home buyers seminars
- Food pantry and closet clean-out quarterly
- Audio and video tapes to sick members/potential members

### **4. Ministry of Financial Stewardship**

- Offertory statement weekly by pastors or members
- Maintenance of church property, etc.
- Creative funding for church ministry
- Regular financial reports to congregation
- Provide for wills emphasis/opportunities

### **5. Ministry of Evangelism and Discipleship**

- Youth Bible services
- Exciting Sunday school
- Incentives for attending events
- Home visits to the unchurched
- Video church events

- Leadership training
- Follow-up of first-time visitors
- Purchase audio/video teachings
- 11:00 A.M. youth church service
- Revivals

## **6. Visiting potential members**

- Use of brochures
- Membership referrals
- New member classes
- Prayer and Bible study
- Relevant preaching

## *Holmes Chapel Presbyterian Church Community Recruitment/Survey Form*

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

1. What do you feel is the greatest need of this community?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How could a church be helpful to this community?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In what way could a minister be helpful to people of this community?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How could Holmes Chapel be helpful to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Are you a member of a church? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
6. Do you have transportation to church? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
7. Could we pick you or a family member up for Sunday school or worship service?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_  
Sunday school \_\_\_\_ Worship \_\_\_\_
8. Can someone come back later to talk to you or a family member about starting a relationship with Jesus Christ? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
9. Do you know of anyone else we can visit who you feel would be interested in attending a church?

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

# Ten Points of Engagement in Racial Justice Ministry for African American Congregations

Rev. W. Mark Koenig

Rev. Dr. Otis Turner

Office of Racial Justice

1. Articulate the difference between race prejudice (negative prejudgments based on insufficient evidence) and racism (the combination of race prejudice and power to create systems that disadvantage some and grant privilege to others).
2. Hold workshops that identify and help people address internalized oppression.
3. Identify issues impacted by racism (i.e., capital punishment, the criminal justice system, poverty, education, equal employment opportunities, economic development). Learn about the issues. Become an advocate for justice. For more information, contact The Office of Racial Justice Policy Development, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202. The telephone number is (888) 728-7228, ext. 5698.
4. Purchase *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* for the congregational library or resource center. If the congregation is in a position to purchase the *Microsoft Encarta Africana* on CD-ROM for a computer, consider making the computer available for people in the neighborhood to use. Purchase other African and African American resources for your library.
5. Provide workshops on African American heritage for the congregation's leaders and members and people in the community.
6. Participate in community-wide Black Heritage celebrations on a regular basis.
7. Invite African nationals to come to your worship service to meet members of your congregation and to talk to them about their experiences. Encourage community participation.

8. Plan and implement a mission project with a congregation whose members are of a different race or ethnic group. Try to focus on some of the systemic issues identified in Item 3.
9. When contracting work with other companies or making purchases, do business with companies owned by people of color. Move beyond the cleaning crews and caterers; consider (and seek out) people of color as the attorneys and accountants for the congregation.
10. Develop a racial justice committee to provide coordination and leadership to the congregation's racial justice ministry.

# *Where to Go for Help*

There are many African American leaders across the church who have helped crisis and maintenance churches become growth churches. They are good resource consultants for the various stages of the visioning and planning process for the growth of your congregation. The following places are eager to help you find the people and the financial resources you need.

## **Local**

National Black Presbyterian Caucus Chapter Leadership  
Presbytery Office

## **Regional**

National Black Presbyterian Caucus Regional Representative  
Synod Office

## **General Assembly**

Office of Black Congregational Enhancement, Racial Ethnic Ministries Program Area, National Ministries Division, 100 Witherspoon Street, Room 3083, Louisville, KY 40202, 1-888-728-7228, ext. 5697, or (502) 569-5697

African American Leadership Training and Resource Development Office, Christian Education Program Area, Congregational Ministries Division, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202, 1-888-728-7228, ext. 8488, or (502) 569-8488

Other General Assembly Offices

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**To obtain copies of these papers, call 1-888-728-7228, ext. 5697.**

# Notes

The Black Congregational Enhancement Office is thankful to the following African American leaders for contributing their papers for use in this resource.

Rev. Dr. Alford Branch

Dr. Melva Wilson Costen

Rev. Dr. Edward Davis

Rev. W. Mark Koenig

Rev. Dr. Mark Lomax

Rev. Kermit E. Overton (deceased)

Rev. Dr. Marsha Snulligan-Haney

Rev. Dr. Otis Turner

Rev. Dr. Rita Dixon is staff associate for the Black Congregational Enhancement Office. She expresses her gratitude to the African American Redevelopment leaders for their contributions and to Mr. Vince Patton for his editorial assistance in compiling the articles in this resource.

**For more information, contact:**

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
National Ministries Division  
Racial Ethnic Ministries Program Area  
100 Witherspoon Street  
Louisville, KY 40202-1396  
Phone (888) 728-7228, ext. 5697

# Living the Vision series

There is a hunger for information on evangelism and church growth. *Living the Vision* is a series of booklets produced by the Evangelism and Church Development Program Area of the National Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This booklet and other new resources will help the denomination with information to meet the challenge of reaching the unchurched and minister to many different racial and ethnic groups in the next millennium. The series is part of our implementation of *A Vision for Church Growth in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, adopted by the 211th General Assembly (1999). For more details about this series contact ECD at (888) 728-7228, ext. 5227, or by e-mail [ECD@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:ECD@ctr.pcusa.org).



Evangelism  
and Church  
Development