

Black United Methodist pastors make history

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minister from Nashville, said such an event also instills pride because they learn the history of African Americans in the UMC. But while the pastors were learning their history, Ross said they were also preparing them to handle issues that face the church today.

"We have in today's society an almost amoral culture," he said in talking about the need for the black church. "Pleasure-seeking at whatever cost and it is harmful in a number of ways."

He said that black people are making others rich because other communities are exploiting the addictions of African Americans and it is

up to ministers to help strengthen families and individuals spiritually.

Because of that added pressure on pastors, Ross said it's important for ministers to come together and talk about what's going on in their communities and learn from each another.

In March, the United

Methodist Church launched The National Coalition of Young Adult African-American Pastors to promote Christian conferencing among black pastors under age 41 in an effort to combat potential shortage of black United Methodist ministers.

After extensive research, the coalition found the largest age group of African-Ameri-

can clergy to be between 49 and 53; those pastors will retire in the next 10 years. The following average mean group is about 29 years old.

Though the coalition is an independent organization with no official ties to any group in the UMC, it was founded under the banner of the biennial Convocation for Pastors of African American

Churches. The coalition will use leadership networks and groups, as well as national and regional events, to assist clergy in reaching their maximum potential.

Funding for the group will come through dues and registration fees, along with contributions from annual conferences.

Where should I sit?

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table and sits down as if it were reserve for him. Unfortunately, someone comes along, taps him on the shoulder and says, "I'm sorry, you're going to have to move. This is not your seat. You'll have to find another table, and I think there's one in the back!"

To the snickering of the other invited guests, this once self-important person shrinks back to the less honored seat. Such a foolish error! Arrogance is his downfall. Had he not assumed a certain level of importance, such humiliation would have been avoided. Next Jesus suggests a strategy to save a person from this type of shame.

Humble are promoted (vv. 10, 11)

10. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

Go back to the previous illustration of the elected official coming to town. You've come into the convention hall and seated yourself in the farthest corner of the building, perhaps more distant from the official than anyone else.

Next you see him stand and begin peering into the crowd. Perhaps he asks for assistance in finding you. When he finally sees you, he smiles and begins motioning for you to come up front. He's expecting you to sit with him. In full view of all, you make your way up front. How much better this is than to assume a place at the front only to be sent away in shame.

Jesus tells us not to make false assumptions about personal importance. Start by sitting in the back and being thankful for even being asked to come in the first place. Then the one who invited you may give you a great honor by escorting you to the head table. That would be tremendous, so much better than being told to move because someone more important than you needs a good seat.

Mass. man leaves service to steal truck

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FRAMINGHAM, Mass. — Churchgoer Jose Figueroa might not have been paying attention when his pastor covered the Biblical teachings on stealing.

Police said Figueroa, 32, of Providence, R.I., left in the

middle of services Sunday at the Asamblea de Iglesias Christianos de Framingham to break into a truck parked outside.

"You can't make this stuff up," Framingham police Lt. Vincent Alfano said.

Figueroa pleaded innocent Monday and was being held

on \$500 bail.

Figueroa was allegedly caught by the truck's owner, Lou Cintolo, whose parents own a nearby convenience store.

Cintolo's mother, Mary, told the MetroWest Daily News of Framingham that her son saw Figueroa as he was leav-

ing his house to go shopping and that her son held Figueroa down on the hood of the truck until police arrived.

"Imagine leaving church and going out to steal something," said Mary Cintolo. "What's this world coming to?"

Court reverses Ten Commandments ruling

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LINCOLN, Nebraska — A federal appeals court Friday reversed its earlier ruling that said a Ten Commandments monument must be removed from a small town's park.

The ruling is the latest in a contentious debate being contested across the United States, as opponents to religious moments say they breach the constitution's separation of church and state, while other groups say they simply reflect the nation's historic religious roots.

The 11-2 ruling Friday from the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed a ruling

last year from one of the court's three-judge panels stating that the monument in Plattsmouth, about 60 miles northeast of Lincoln, must be removed.

The court cited a June ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that said it was constitutionally permissible to display the Ten Commandments on the grounds of the Texas Capitol.

But on the same day the Supreme Court made the Texas ruling, it also issued a ruling that struck down Ten Commandments displays inside two Kentucky courthouses.

The Supreme Court said

the key to whether a display is constitutional hinges on whether there is a religious purpose behind it.

Those rulings meant thousands of Ten Commandments displays around the nation will be validated if their primary purpose is to honor the nation's legal, rather than religious, traditions. Location also will be considered, with wide open spaces more acceptable than schoolhouses filled with young students.

It was on this basis that the federal appeals court in

Nebraska made its Friday decision.

"The Plattsmouth monument makes passive and permissible use of the text of the Ten Commandments to acknowledge the role of religion in our nation's heritage," Judge Pasco Bowman wrote in the ruling.

The Plattsmouth monument was erected in 1965 and is among hundreds donated to cities and counties around the nation in the 1950s and 1960s by the Fraternal Order of Eagles, a civic organization.

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