## As King's colleagues leave the pulpit, a new generation steps in

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year ago, preaching a social justice gospel is still viable and necessary—even with-out King and his compatri-

out King and his compatri-ots. "God is always raising up a voice or voices to speak to the needs of the present day," he said, is to follow the example that King and others set of working for justice. The new generation defi-nitely has its work cut out, in terms of reaching people who may be paying more atten-

may be paying more atten-tion to a different kind of preaching: prosperity gospel,

which focuses more on per-sonal health and well-being. "I think there's an enor-mous social justice gospel education agenda that faces this generation that succeeds some of the towering figures in the black pulpit," said Robert Franklin, professor of social ethics at Emory Uni-versity.

Along with Walker, a nu ber of well-known pastors ber of well-known pastors-many with ties to King-have either retired recently or announced intentions to do

The Rev. Fred Shut-tlesworth, one of the founders of the Southern

Christian Leadership Con-ference, stepped down from the pulpit at the Greater New Light Baptist Church in Cincinatti last year. The Rev. James A. Forbes Jr., the first black senior minister at New York's Riverside Church, will

officially retire in June. Rev. William H. Gray III, officially retire in June. Rev. William H. Gray III, the third generation of his family to lead Bright Hope Baptist Church in Philadel-phia, will step down next month. And the Rev. Jeremi-ah A. Wright, Jr. has announced he will step down from Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago in 2008. of Christ in Chicago in 2008.

Gray is hopeful about the future. His church selected 32-year-old Rev. Kevin R. Johnson, assistant pastor at Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church, to be the next senior minister. min iinister. "I think one of the mistakes

"I think one of the mistakes that we make is to institu-tionalize a person rather than institutionalize a move-ment," he said. "Guys like me moving on, passing the torch to a new generation of young folk is good. That's positive." Shuttlesworth agreed. "In each generation people come

each generation people come and they affirm their com-mitment," he said.

A new generation of leader-ship could also provide an opportunity, a way to make struggle for civil rights more relevant and not something that ended decades ago, said Harris-Lacewell. "I think it's potentially real-by beatibut for us to more

"I think it's potentially real-ly healthy for us to move away from imagining that the social gospel theological-ly or the civil rights move-ment politically started with or ended with Martin Luther King," she said. "It might actually be good to move into a new genera-

to move into a new genera-tion that has to make claims and and arguments for civil rights that are not rooted in

nent that's 40 years a m old.

a movement that's 40 years old." At 32, there is no question that Kevin Johnson repre-sents the younger generation as he takes over at Philadel-phia's Bright Hope Baptist for Gray, who has long been one of the nation's most influ-ential black ministers. "I see the church as really the beacon light for the black communuty," said Johnson. "The light may have dimmed in the past few years, but I believe with this new genera-tion of preachers, that they are going to make sure that the mantle is carried and the light still shines." light still shines.

## Church pews remain separated by color despite desegregation

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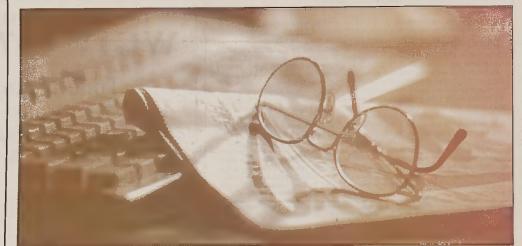
said the man soon left the

said the man soon left the church. "There was simply no com-mon ground. People are sat-isfied with worshipping seg-regated and nothing chal-lenges the church to be integrated. That can't be apply-ing the Word of God. There has to be unity," he said. To Lewis, that unity comes

addressing race as an by issue

"When you see race in the scriptures you don't skip over them, you address them and you realize we as people are much more alike than we are different," he said. "If you don't make race a public issue it becomes a silent issue. Christ broke down the dividing walls and made us one on common ground. My passion, my burden, is to show that at least one church in Dothan is that way."

show that at least one church in Dothan is that way." The Rev. R. Paul Hollman of the majority black Greater Beulah Baptist Church con-gregation said he believes of the majority black Greater Beulah Baptist Church con-gregation said he believes change is happening throughout Dothan and must continue through pas-tors. Churches are market-ing integration through bil-boards and inagazines. The-vision ministries, black and white, he said, are minister-ing to people through all walks of life. "Pastors and leaders must be the advocates and open to diversity and we must lead our people to do so. When you preach the truth I don't think people care what color you are," he said. Calvary Baptist Church hosts several integrated pro-grams for residents in order to reach everyone with God's word, said Wright, associate senior pastor. The church is predominantly white. "There's still some old school thinking that everybody has their own place, but I believe that's slowly fading away," he said.



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