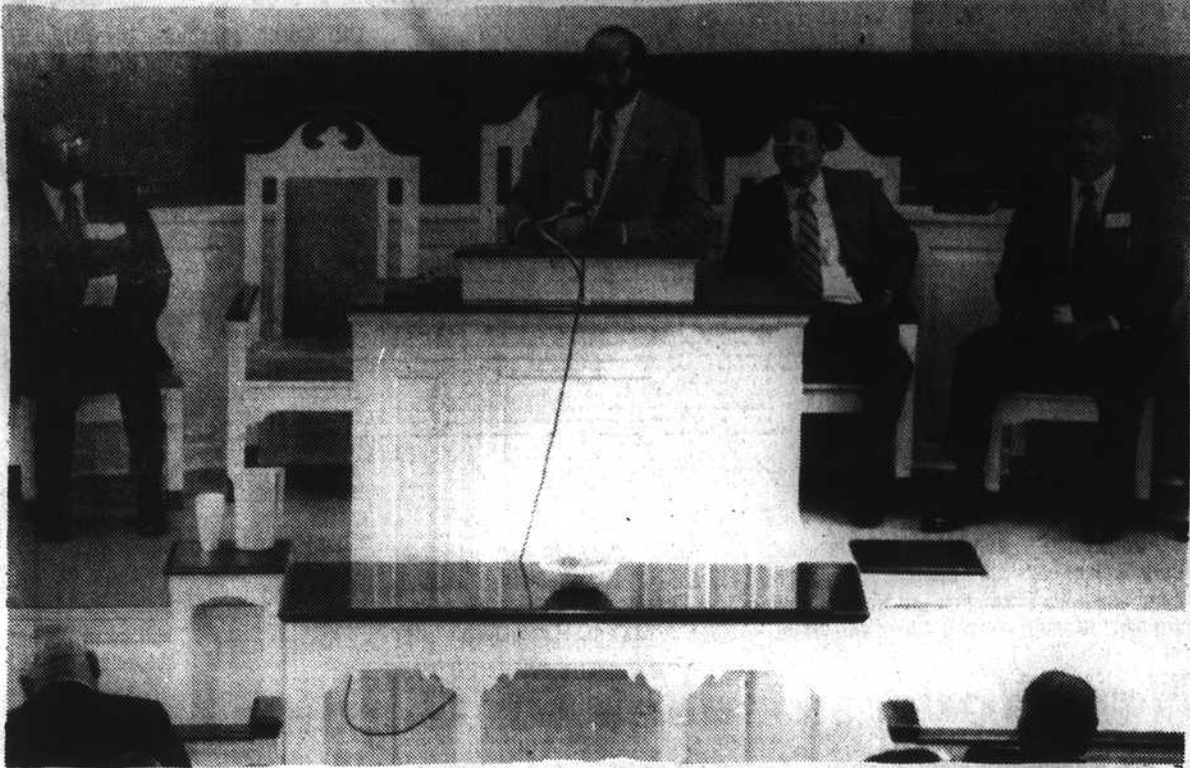


RELIGION TODAY



PASTOR'S CONFERENCE—Dr. Humphrey addresses the 15th Annual Pastor's Conference at Shaw Divinity School. Also pictured are Dr. Andre' Carr (far left), Dr. Gregory Headen and Clyde Walton. (Photo by Talib Sabir-Calloway)

Church Continuing To Maintain A Self-Sufficiency Tradition

SUFFOLK (AP)—The Church of God and Saints of Christ is continuing its tradition of self-sufficiency and has hired a Washington, D.C.-based consultant to help it develop its land holdings into a \$150 million complex of homes, apartments, offices, stores and a hotel.

Hammer, Siler, George and Associates said the church's plan "is to preserve the land and buildings that have served the membership in its developing years" and to provide for the stable financial future of the church and congregation.

The Bellville area church, which claims affiliate tabernacles across the country and in Africa, the West Indies and Canada, refused to release figures on membership or finances. Members say the group was founded by Prophet William S. Crowdy, a Santa Fe Railroad cook, when he had a vision in 1896 in which God told him to form the sect and lead his people to new land.

Layman Declares War On Myths, Media Hype

OAKLAND, Calif.—By the time United Methodist layman Willie Brown finished talking, most of the 500 black church folks assembled were on their feet, and the rest were sitting straighter and prouder, and shouting, "Amen."

The charismatic speaker of the assembly of the California State Legislature, in addressing the 20th anniversary banquet of Black Methodists for Church Renewal, United Methodism's black caucus, March 19 declared war on myths and media hype about crises in black families and disunity and a lack of leadership in black communities.

He called on black clergy and laypeople to continue working for positive social change through the black church, which he described as the birthplace of "every significant black political and spiritual movement," because often it was "the only institution they'd let us have for our own."

Refuting the "two-parents-two-kids-in-suburbia" archetypical family as a bogus, unrealistic measure, he traced the strength of the black extended family back to pre-slavery America. And black people must continue to extol the theme of communal living, working and actions, he said.

The San Francisco churchman, who is national chairperson of the Jesse Jackson presidential campaign, mixed country preacher with teacher with polished politician as he recounted how black citizens of the United States historically have bucked the odds in church and society.

From there he moved on to the growing impact of black citizens in the nation's political processes. Although the Reagan years sent some gains for blacks into a tailspin, blacks are "on the threshold of history," Brown said.

"In 1984 when Jackson ran he put two million blacks on the [voter] rolls who'd never voted before," Brown reminded his listeners. In the 1986 congressional elections, although Jackson's name was not on the ballot, blacks and other people of color claimed their voting power, Brown said. That and white voter apathy "turned Washington upside-down," he added.

"When the dust cleared, the power on the Hill had shifted" and five new senators had received less than 40 percent of the white vote in their home states. Each won, he said, because of having 90 percent or more of the black vote.

Church Urges Clemency For Six Heading To S. African Gallows

NEW YORK, N.Y.—Officers of the United Methodist Mission Board have cabled South African President P.W. Botha urging clemency for six blacks scheduled to be hanged March 18.

The United Methodist Office at the United Nations received word from the U.S. State Department's Africa Desk that the executions have been postponed until April 18 to allow the defense to introduce new evidence.

Bishop James M. Ault of the Pittsburgh area and Rev. Randolph Nugent, president and general secretary, respectively, of the Board of Global Ministries, acted after President Reagan made an unusual personal appeal to South Africa to grant clemency to the five men and one woman, known as the "Sharpeville Six," convicted of complicity in a 1984 mob killing.

The United Methodists said they were "appalled" that the appeal by the six was rejected and an execution date set. "We urge you to grant clemency and to issue a stay of execution immediately... in the name of Christian justice and righteousness," Bishop Ault and Dr. Nugent wrote.

Officers of the World Division of the Board of Global Ministries sent letters of commendation to President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz, thanking them for their efforts on behalf of the condemned South Africans.

"Please continue to urge President Botha to order a stay of execution," pleaded Bishop Roy I. Sano of Denver, Peggy Billings and Doreen Tilghman. The three are the president, deputy general secretary and Africa secretary of the division, respectively.

The Sharpeville Six are Mojalefa Sefatsa, 32; Reid Mokoena, 24; Oupa Diniso, 32; Duma Khumalo, 28; Francis Mokhesi, 30; and Theresa Ramashmole, 28. Four of the six are either Anglican or Roman Catholic.

In an earlier communication to top U.S. officials, World Division officers noted that the six were found guilty of the murder of Sharpeville Deputy Mayor Khuswayo Diamini on the grounds that they had "common purpose" with the crowd whose intention it was to murder him. They were sentenced to death even though the South African appeals court said, "It has not been proved in the case of the six accused... that their conduct had contributed causally to the death of the deceased."

According to the New York Times, the United States has appealed to the South African government through diplomatic channels and public statements in a meeting in Geneva March 14 between Chester A.

Crocker, assistant secretary of state for African Affairs, and South Africa's foreign minister, Roelof F. Botha. Other appeals have come from Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain, Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany and Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The United Nations Security Council unanimously called on Pretoria to commute the sentences.

When relatives of two of the six visited the United States in early March to enlist support for clemency pleas, their trip to Washington was facilitated by Melba Smith, resource coordinator at the United Methodist Office at the United Nations, and Rose Catchings of the World Division. On Capitol Hill they saw Chester Crocker and members of both houses of Congress.

Several denominational representatives in Washington were among those urging Reagan to intercede for the condemned six.

Drugs, Violence Call Methodists To Action

OAKLAND, Calif.—Mounting drug-related violence and gang activity in U.S. urban areas have prompted a call to action by United Methodism's 20-year-old black caucus.

Nearly 500 black church leaders attending the Black Methodists for Church Renewal 20th anniversary meeting here March 15-19 asked regional units to make eradicating urban violence a budgetary and programmatic priority for the next four years.

Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland and Cincinnati were identified as crisis areas. The North Carolina jurisdictional branch of the caucus was asked to earmark funds to address youth violence and crime, beginning no later than September.

An offering was collected to help the North Central group begin work in Detroit, described in the resolution and in recent news stories as "the most dangerous city in the nation for youth." Detroit has the highest homicide rate in the nation, according to reports, and during the past two years 15 of every 100,000 teens died in drug-, gang- or crime-related activities.



The average U.S. household consists of 2.73 persons.



FRIENDLY CHAT—Rev. Helen McLaughlin, left, director of Women's Concerns at Shaw Divinity School chats with Freida Nash during the Pastor's Conference at Shaw Divinity School. (Photo by Talib Sabir-Calloway)

The black church owned about 1,000 acres in north Suffolk around the turn of the century, but sold off about half of its holdings during the Depression. Members formed a self-sufficient communal farm, industrial complex and school in the early 1900s. At one point, they were farming 850 acres and 16 acres of oyster beds. The commune later dissolved, but the church flourished.

Church members believe blacks in America are descended from the lost tribe of Israel. The church prohibits divorce and the use of alcohol.

In 1980, the church built a multipurpose center and world headquarters called the Temple Beth El. Later, a 1,500-seat sanctuary was added. The undeveloped land surrounding the complex has been assessed at \$8.5 million by the city.

In 1985, the church used a \$1.7 million Housing and Urban Development grant to build a home for the elderly and handicapped near the temple.

Under the proposed land-use plan, 141 acres would be preserved for church use and would include the old commune site. Another 27 acres would be set aside for homes of church members.

Over the next 20 to 30 years, the church would develop the remaining property into 900,000 square feet of office space, 155,000 square feet of retail space, 150 hotel rooms and 2,100 residential units.

The hotel would cater to visitors to the church's four annual international meetings.

The plan must be approved by the city planning commission, which meets April 19.

Racial Problem Forces Rev. Out

ORANGEBURG, S.C. (AP)—A pastor who opposed his congregation's decision to bar blacks from the church preschool has resigned at the request of the church's deacons.

"It all goes back to the integration issue. I was like a toy two children were fighting over." The Rev. Kenneth Newton said about his resignation and the split among members of Northside Baptist Church.

In an unsigned letter to church members dated March 14, the deacons said they unanimously recommended that Newton resign immediately. The letter said the recommendation was based on "matters of trustworthiness that had a significant effect on the church."

Wyman Lawson, chairman of the deacons, would not comment on the letter.

Newton, however, said Monday the mistrust was mutual.

"The last pastor stayed here 15 months and said the deacons would not cooperate with him and left. I was able to stay here 13 1/2 years under adverse circumstances," Newton said.

The deacons' letter said Newton was offered \$10,000 in severance pay. He accepted the money March 4 and resigned that day.

Some church members who were opposed to the deacons' action sent out a letter listing Newton's accomplishments. They said when Newton first came to Northside in 1974, the church was \$90,000 in debt.

The letter said the debt has been paid along with renovations to the church, opening the learning center for children and purchase of 7.6 acres of land and seven houses. The group also said the church's budget has increased from \$90,000 to \$500,000 under Newton's leadership.

In a secret vote last October, the congregation decided by a two-thirds majority that blacks should not be accepted by Northside Baptist Learning Center. Afterward, Newton attacked the decision publicly, angering some congregants.

TWO MINUTES

WITH THE BIBLE

BY CORNELIUS R. STAM, PRES.
WORLD BIBLE SOCIETY
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60646

THE WAY TO HEAVEN

Perhaps you have heard the story of the man who inquired from a mountaineer the way to a certain destination. The mountaineer stuttered and stammered and finally said: "You can't get there from here."

We may smile at this, but the result would be even more amusing—and sad—were we to ask the average person on the street the way to heaven.

What is the way to heaven? It is interesting to read in God's Word what many think about this. In Proverbs 14:12 we read: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

What are some of these "ways" that "seem right" to men, leading them to hope for heaven? Joining a church? Being baptized? Doing one's best? Keeping the ten commandments? Loving one's neighbor as himself? These are a few of the ways that men follow, hoping to gain eternal life, but they all come under one heading: "Do good."

But what do the Scriptures say about this? In the Gospel according to John there are recorded for us, seven "I am's," which the Lord Jesus Christ used in speaking of Himself. One of these is found in John 14:6: "I AM THE WAY, the truth, and the life; NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER BUT BY ME." This passage has a double significance, since it was not only the declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ, but at the same time a declaration of the divinely inspired Scriptures.

From this verse we learn not only that Jesus is the only way to the Father, but also that He is "THE TRUTH" to be believed and trusted in. Thus we can believe the Lord Jesus when He claims to be the way to heaven.

But according to this passage He is also "THE LIFE." As we place our faith in Him, as the One who died on the cross for us, we receive eternal life. "HE DIED THAT WE MIGHT LIVE."

KALEIDOSCOPE

BY RUTH HEINER

The glorious resurrection announcement, "He is not here, for He is risen" (Matthew 16:21-23) was a miracle for all mankind. A miracle for all mankind as He gave His life to atone for the sins of all of the Heavenly Father's children.

"He is not here, but is risen," notes Luke who wrote that it was the first day of the week, very early in the morning when they came unto the sepulchre, bringing spices which they had prepared, to find the stone rolled away, and they found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

Our Lord, our Redeemer suffered death in the flesh, and the pain of all men so that He could plead our cause with the Father. He overcame death that we all might also be saved from death and hell, if we repent. Modern Revelation, "And He hath risen again from the dead, that He might bring all men unto Him on condition of repentance."

What a glorious principle that Christ could descend below all men to redeem them from the grave unto resurrection. He died, was buried, and rose again on the third day to ascend to His Father and our Father.

Resurrection is a free gift for all mankind, and it is by that grace of God that Christ His Son being half divine could accomplish that redemption for us.

"He hath risen from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him on condition of repentance."

Although we are to be resurrected (saved by grace), the atonement of Jesus Christ makes all of us answerable for our own lives. We are responsible for our own sins, lives and actions. As one tries to place blame on another, or Satan, he or she has to realize that salvation from the grave does not mean that we are not accountable for our own selves.

Free agency means responsibility. Both agency and resurrection are for all, and as we rejoice in both blessings, we honor the Father and the Son. What joy to know that we who are not pure will be able to follow the example of the Savior in life and in death to be more fit for the kingdom of our Heavenly Father, and to become clean and worthy to abide in His presence when we put our lives in order.

In some way that is beyond the comprehension of men, the Savior suffered great drops of blood at every pore to take upon himself our sins, since we are not capable of paying for all of our sins. He made it possible for us to repent of our sins, and be forgiven to be able to dwell with Him. He would persuade all men to come unto Christ, but never force them, for the free will makes it a matter of choice.

We thank God for His beloved Son, whose indescribable suffering as He gave His life on Calvary on the cross paid the debt of mortal sin. He broke the bonds of death, and with Godly power rose triumphant from the tomb. As Redeemer of all mankind, He is our Savior, Savior of all, Son of God and Author of our salvation.

As we remember Him on Easter morning, let us resolve to walk in obedience to His teachings and commandments as He held out His hands to all men saying, "Come, follow me!"

Shirley Caesar Gathering Fans Through Music

Phenomenal is the only word which adequately describes the musical talents of Evangelist Shirley Caesar. Her phenomenalism is evidenced by 11 Grammy Award nominations, five Grammys, three gold albums, six Dove Awards, thousands of sold-out concerts, and her demonstrated ability to continuously release album after album with astounding success. Her recordings have consistently remained at the top of the gospel charts.

Born and raised in Durham, N.C., Caesar's career began in the South where she performed as "Baby Shirley Caesar" and extends to modern-day performances at such places as Radio City Music Hall, Constitution Hall, and the White House. Currently, she is starring in the play, "Resolutions," a Christian musical melodrama.

She is a model contemporary woman who is truly doing it all. In addition to being a recording artist and performer, she is also a pastor and evangelist, a wife, a businesswoman, an elected city official (member of Durham's City Council), and above all, a humanitarian. She operates the Shirley Caesar Outreach Ministries, Inc., a non-profit organization which provides emergency funds, food, clothing and shelter for the underprivileged and the needy; and a very viable Christian outreach ministry consisting of radio broadcasting, revivals, crusades and evangelistic meetings. This ministry is funded by proceeds from her concerts and an annual crusade convention held during the month of July in Durham.

Ms. Caesar has a bachelor of arts degree in business administration from Shaw University in Raleigh, and an honorary degree from Southeastern University in Charleston, S.C. She is an honorary member of the Board of Directors of Shaw Divinity School.