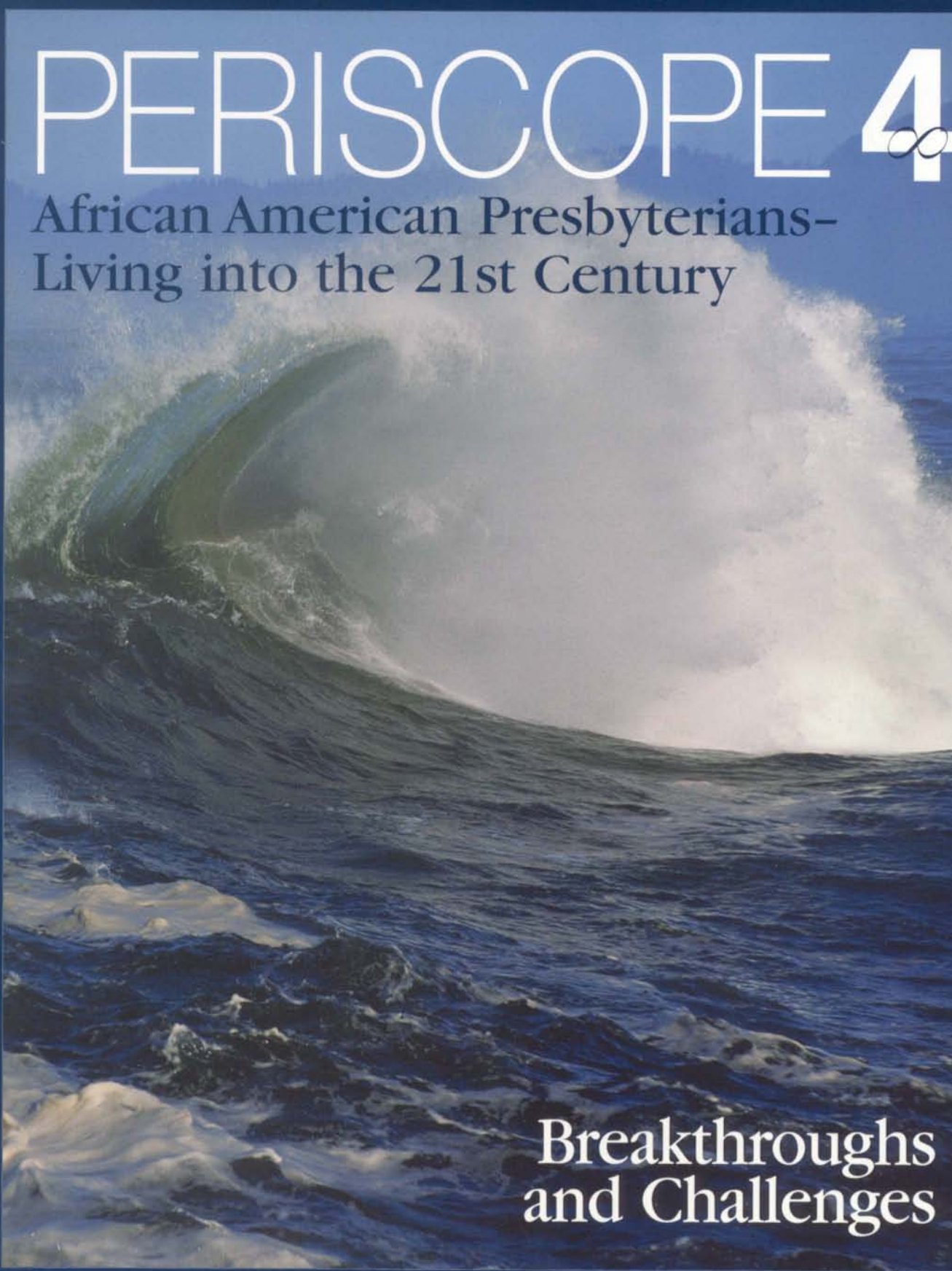


PERISCOPE 4

African American Presbyterians—
Living into the 21st Century

Breakthroughs
and Challenges

197 Years of Ministry, 1807-2004

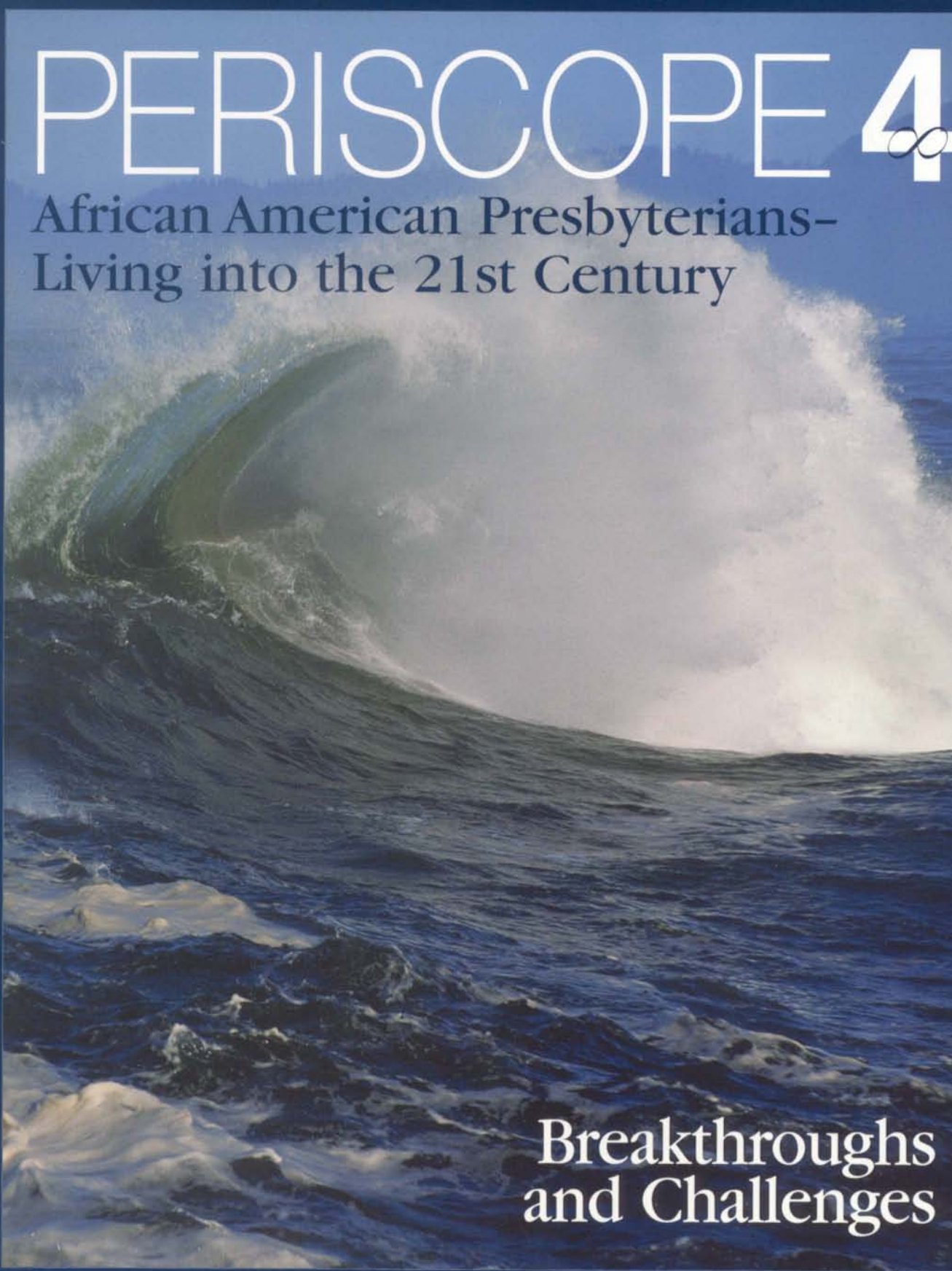


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West African Adinkra Symbols and Meanings



Gye Nyame: “except for God”; the supremacy of God



Funtunfunefu Denkyemfunefu: symbol of democracy, unity in diversity



Nyame Biribi Wo Soro: “God is in the heavens”; a symbol of hope



Nsaa: a symbol of excellence, genuineness, and authenticity



Osram Ne Nsoromma: “the moon and the star”—the symbol of love, faithfulness, and harmony



Hye Wonbye: indestructable, enduring



Sankofa: alternate version of the Sankofa below



Dwennimmen: “the ram’s horns”; symbol of humility and strength



Nyame Nti: “by God’s grace”; faith and trust in God



Adinkrabene: the chief Adinkra symbol for greatness, charisma, and leadership



Sankofa: “return and get it”; learn from the past



Sesa Woruban: “I change or transform my life”

PERISCOPE 4

African American Presbyterians—
Living into the 21st Century

**Breakthroughs
and Challenges**

197 Years of Ministry, 1807-2004

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Introduction

Darius L. Swann

This is the fourth issue of an occasional journal, titled *Periscope*, created by African American Presbyterians and originally intended to celebrate 175 years of their ministry in the United States. The first issue was published in 1982 to mark the 175 years since the founding of the First African Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. The authors of the first issues of this journal were quite clear that 1807 did not mark the first involvement of African Americans with the Presbyterian Church, but rather the founding of the first African congregation, which was a significant development in their relation to the church. In 1992 a third issue of *Periscope* was published.

These journals are not by any stretch of the imagination histories of Black Presbyterianism: that would require several volumes and many times the number of pages than this publication offers. Rather, the title gives a clue to the nature of the contents of these pages. When a submarine puts up its periscope, its crew members are enabled to look around and see the surroundings at that moment. The view is not comprehensive, but indicative. Similarly, this collection of articles about persons, events, institutions, and developments, incomplete as it is, will give a sense of our bearings today and what challenges lie ahead.

The Reunion of Reunions in 1998 and the Reunion of Congregations in 2002 helped to remind us of our history and to be empowered by it. The decade-plus that separates *Periscope 4* from *Periscope 3* is roughly the span of time in which we have functioned as a reunited

church. So what is recounted here has been accomplished against a changed background. Some of the new challenges, as well as the old, may be gleaned from a reading of Rita Dixon's section on Black Congregational Enhancement and Curtis Jones's account of "The National Black Presbyterian Caucus: Achievements, Opportunities, and Challenges." Especially noteworthy is the new thrust toward cooperation with and development of Immigrant Churches. The birth and development of new congregations of African immigrants organized around particular language groups should be of special interest to African Americans. In addition, Eugene Turner's article calls us to recognize the ecumenical challenges facing Black Presbyterians.

The present issue of *Periscope* also lifts up a selection of individuals whose ministries are representative of the contributions Black Presbyterians have made to and in the PC(USA). The work of Women of Faith and staff executives at synod and presbytery levels is indicative of the efforts of a larger group of persons who have helped to push the church toward the body it professes to be. We also recognize some heavy losses: two past moderators of the General Assembly and one of the most astute strategists in the Southeast.

Arlene Gordon has pointed us to resources that will guide and enrich our spirits, and Bettie Durrah's choreopoem, "Breakthroughs and Challenges," sets the tone for our venture into the twenty-first century. Much has been done; much work remains. May God keep our vision clear and our resolve strong!

Preface



James Foster Reese

P*eriscope 4* continues the approach that began with *Periscope 1* and was followed by *Periscope 2 and 3*: to identify and record highlights from the history of African Americans in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its antecedent denominations. The articles and profiles in *Periscope 4* include information on organizational entities that are important to the church's rich and varied history.

Readers of *Periscope 4* will have an opportunity to learn about the African American Presbyterian Church and to deepen their commitment and appreciation for prophetic ministry as they follow persons and programs that are devoutly dedicated to Jesus Christ and the work and witness of African American Presbyterians.

We recognize that there may be some omissions. Thus, the words of Hebrews 11:32 are appropriate: . . . time (and space) would fail for (us) to tell . . . of all who through faith, conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, and won strength out of weakness.

We are surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses" as we journey toward 2007, the 200th anniversary of the first African American congregation in the Presbyterian Church, which was organized in Philadelphia.

Our gratitude is extended to Dr. Darius L. Swann, the editor of *Periscope 4*. Truly, we could not have completed this task without him. We also thank Vince Patton for his assistance in preparing the manuscript for production. We express a collective thank-you to all those who gave informal help and hospitality.

On the journey to 2007 and a larger periscope!

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Breakthroughs and Challenges

African American Presbyterians Living into the 21st Century



Bettie J. Durrah

© 2003

(A choreopoem for three readers)

- 1 Look deep inside the twenty-first century.
- 2 Bring out the periscope
- 3 Look past the mirror.

- 1 Listen for signs of the echo.
- 2 Peer through the crystal ball.
- 3 Ride on the crest of the wave.

- 1 Look into the new millennium
All: The third millennium
 The twenty-first century.

- 2 Look to the future.
- 3 Feel the surge.

- 1 Cross the boundaries.
- 2 Expand your universe.

All: Black Presbyterians.

Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

- 1 Look into your future.
- 2 Review the past.
 Learn from the past.
- 3 But also look around, look under, look above, look back.

- 1 From where have you come?
- 2 What lessons have you learned?
 What are the realities of life?
- 3 Who were our leaders?
 Who are our leaders?

- 1 Who are the unsung heroines and heroes?
- 2 Who are the grassroots leaders?
- 3 Who will be our leaders in the next few years?

- 1 Who will carry us into the next decade?

All: The tried and proven?

 New Young? Turks?
 Emerging leaders?

-
- 2 Vibrant youth on a quest for inclusion?
 - 3 Leaders yet unknown who will rise up and take your place?
 - 1 Where are you in this milieu?
 - 2 Were you the first or the sixth African American titular head?
 - 3 Are you a presbytery or synod executive?
 - 1 College or seminary president?
 - 2 General Assembly staff or local pastor?
 - 3 Elder or minister?
 - 1 New church development pastor or New Wine pastor?
 - 2 Pastor of a growing church? Pastor of a church holding its own?
 - 3 Pastor of First African Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA, First African Presbyterian Church of Lithonia, GA, or New Liberation Presbyterian Church, Memphis, TN?
 - 1 Member of the caucus, part of the mainstream, or both?
 - 2 Church school teacher or Christian educator?
 - 3 Seminary professor or author?
 - 1 Elected leader in the volunteer field?
 - 2 Editor, letter writer, provocateur?
 - 3 Dreamer, Visionary, Prophet?
 - 1 Womanist?
 - 2 None of the above?
 - All: What is [are] the church's mission and ministry?
 - What is [are] your mission and ministry?
 - 3 Have you performed missionary service?
 - 1 Have you lived the polity?
 - 2 Who are you and what are your contributions?
 - 3 How have you been affected?
 - 1 Downsizing or downplaying of your gifts?
 - 2 Glass ceiling or the sky is the limit?
 - 3 Unlimited opportunities or limited opportunities.
 - 1 Inclusion or forced entry?
 - Inclusivity or open door?
 - 2 Did you rise to heights in the women's and men's organization?
 - 3 What did you do at the top and at the bottom?
 - All: Who helped you?
 - Who helped you along?
 - 1 To whom do you serve as a mentor?
 - 2 To whom are you accountable?

All: Africans in the diaspora.

3 "Africa's New World Children," some call you.

All: African Americans

Black and Presbyterian.

-
- 1 Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
 - 2 You bring many generations of involvement
 - 3 In the mission and ministry.
 - 1 Governance and the administration
 - 2 Education and social justices.
 - 3 Pronouncements and actions.
 - 1 Evangelistic actions and cultivation of the mind.
 - 2 You have a heritage and a hope.
You have a history and a name.
 - 3 You have a mission and a ministry.
You have a call and a calling.
 - 1 You have a mission and a ministry.
You have a responsibility and an obligation.
 - 2 What is the wind behind your back?
 - 3 What force is driving you?
 - 1 What catalyst pushes you forward?
 - 2 God of history is on your side.
 - 3 Your presence authenticates mission.
 - 1 You challenge the church; you challenge unjust structures.
 - 2 Repressive structures.
Strictures and weak bonds.
 - 3 At times, you become the loyal opposition.
 - 1 You bear witness to the God of justice.
 - 2 You are a visible witness to a God of love, justice, and mercy.
 - All: You are "New Wine" people.**
 - 1 You have shared the sacred table.
You have expanded the sacred table.
 - 2 You have demanded a place at the table.
 - 3 You helped to create the agenda for the marketplace.
 - 1 You have gone in on the shoulders of giants.
All: Giants in Presbyterianism.
 - 2 Giants in the Black Presbyterian ethos.
Giants in Presbyterian Church history.
 - 3 Giants in the faith community.
Giants in the field of education.
Giants in the world community.
 - 1 You pushed the boundaries of time, space, inclusivity, and hospitality.
 - 2 You were the "first" and the last.
All: Alpha and the Omega.
 - 3 "The last shall be first; the first shall be last," the Scriptures say.

-
- 1 You challenged the notion of inclusivity of privilege.
 - 2 Racism, classism, too.
 - 3 You shared and thus expanded the sacred Table with other brothers and sisters of color.
 - 1 Forming caucuses, Cross-Caucus, new networks, new coalitions, new paradigms for ministry.
 - 2 Your presence around the table makes a difference.
- All: You ask the questions.**
- 3 Your visible presence makes a bold statement.
 - 1 Sometimes it is our silent witness.
At still other times, it is a love witness.
All: Bold witnesses.
 - 2 Go boldly, therefore, through the twenty-first century.
 - 3 What are our challenges as we move through this century?
- 1 We can become many things:
 - All: Agents for reconciliation.**
 - 2 Model for reconciliation as we work with other people of color.
 - 3 New paradigm for forgiveness and openness.
All: Loyal opposition.
Servant leaders.
 - 2 We move through the twenty-first century with new touchstones.
 - 1 Transforming self, transforming church, transforming society.
 - All: Touchstones for discipleship.**
Touchstones for servanthood.
 - 3 We know the barriers that separate us and the boundaries that we can push outward to unite us.
 - 1 We move with a clearer vision of what God would have us do.
 - 2 This century provides a turning point.
 - 3 The new century provides new grace, new models, a Jubilee, a new calling.
 - 1 A catalyst for change.
All: New possibilities.
New possibilities for service.
New possibilities for leadership.
New possibilities for sharing the Good News.
 - 2 The breakthroughs have come,
 - 3 But not without pain and struggle.
 - 1 Joy and disappointment.
 - 2 Excitement and setbacks.
 - 3 New energy and new friends.
- All: The challenge is still here.**
- 1 For inclusion.
 - 2 For real acceptance of diverse gifts and experiences.
 - 3 For honoring the God in each of us.

1 For sharing our particular perspectives and heritage.

All: Breakthroughs and challenges.

2 We accept them for what they are.

And for what they mean as we move forward through the twenty-first century.

Forward into the twenty-first century.

All: Breakthroughs and challenges.

Forward into the twenty-first century

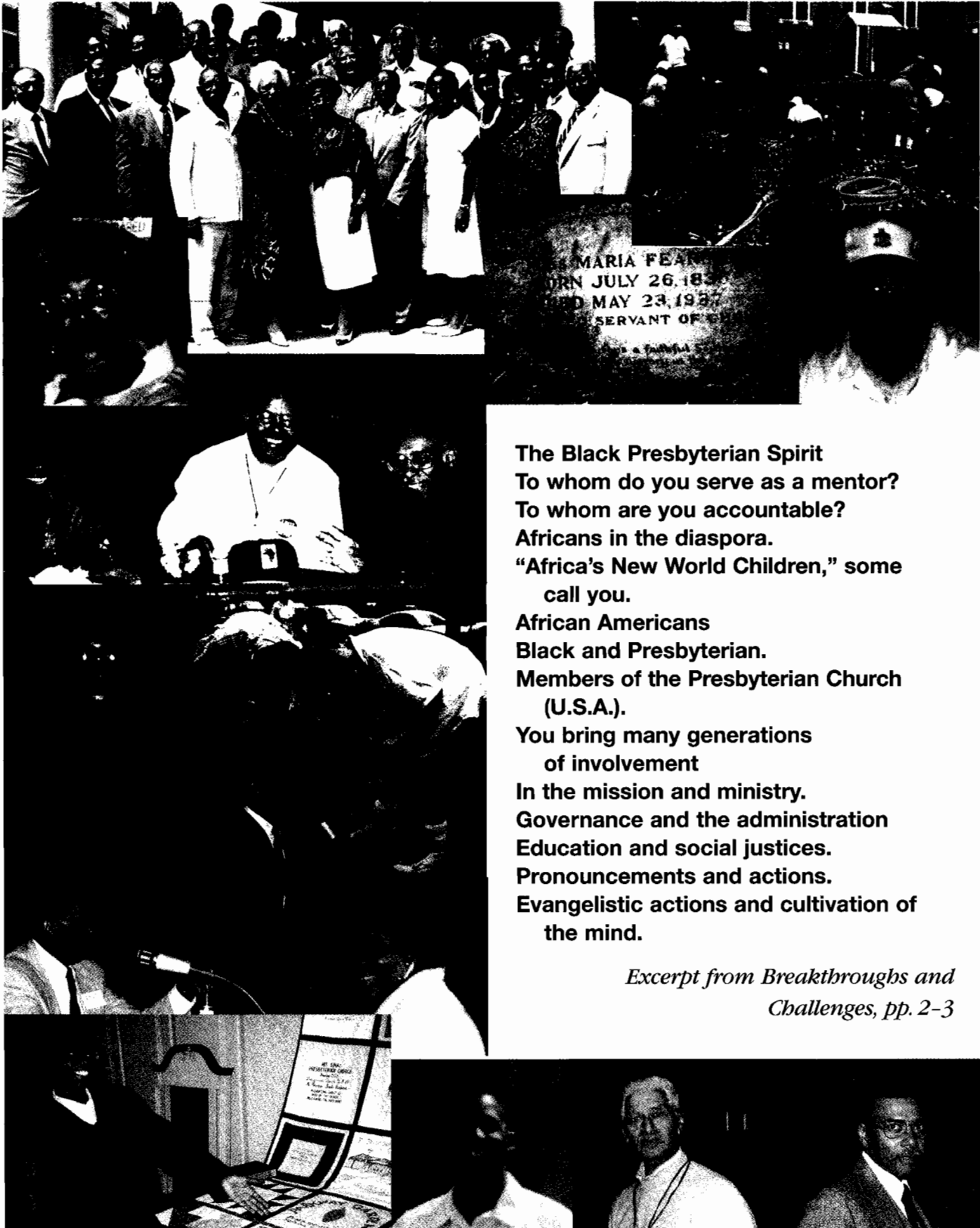
Forward.

Forward.

Forward.

This choreopoem was written in November 1997 as the writer anticipated the beginning of the millennium; it was subsequently modified in January 2003.

The Black Presbyterian Spirit



The Black Presbyterian Spirit
To whom do you serve as a mentor?
To whom are you accountable?
Africans in the diaspora.
“Africa’s New World Children,” some
call you.
African Americans
Black and Presbyterian.
Members of the Presbyterian Church
(U.S.A.).
You bring many generations
of involvement
In the mission and ministry.
Governance and the administration
Education and social justices.
Pronouncements and actions.
Evangelistic actions and cultivation of
the mind.

*Excerpt from Breakthroughs and
Challenges, pp. 2-3*

The Legacy of African American Presbyterians

Bits and Pieces

James Foster Reese

"When your children ask in time to come, 'What do these stones mean...' then you shall tell them..." (Josh. 4:6-7)



Early in his book *Black and Presbyterian*, Gayraud S. Wilmore writes "Black Presbyterians . . . have special gifts to bring to the Christian Faith." There is a personal witness of, from, and by Black Presbyterians in ministry. These gifts and

the number of persons who bring or exhibit these gifts defy tabulation and cannot be contained in a single article. The following "Bits and Pieces" are provided to whet the appetite of readers to research and learn more about Black Presbyterians. There is an urgency to share our history, especially with the youth.

Messengers of Truth and Conviction

The first Black newspaper in America, *Freedom's Journal* (1827) was founded by Samuel Cornish, a Black Presbyterian clergyman. Along with James Russwin, he created *Rights of All* (1827), *Weekly Advocate* (1836), and the *Colored American* (1837). Cornish, who was committed to political action, was active in the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and was the founder of the First Colored Presbyterian Church.

Theodore S. Wright became the first African American to graduate from a theological seminary. He graduated from Princeton in 1828. Wright and Cornish were agents and speakers for various societies. Side by side they represented the free Black community of the north in the antislavery movement.

Advocates for Freedom and Justice

Lincoln University was the first institution of higher education for Black persons in the United States of America. It was opened in Philadelphia by Presbyterians in 1854. Its motto, written across the university's entrance, read, "If the Son has made you free, ye are free indeed" (John 8:36).

Catawba Presbytery, one of the earliest all-Black presbyteries, had within its bounds one of its first two congregations. It was founded in North Carolina in 1865 and named "Freedom."

Henry Highland Garnet, pastor of 15th Street Presbyterian in Washington, D.C., gave a powerful address in which he called for slaves to begin an armed struggle. So powerful and so demanding was the speech that it frightened Frederick Douglass! Garnet's words were, "Let your motto be 'Resistance, Resistance, Resistance.'" No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance! Black Presbyterians speak up for freedom, social justice, racial justice, *even if no one else speaks.*"

Francis Grimke, pastor of 15th Street Presbyterian in Washington, D.C., said on March 17, 1919, "It is our duty to keep up the agitation for our rights, not only for our sakes, but for the sake of the nation at large. It would not only be against our own interest not to be so, but it would be unpatriotic for us to acquiesce in the present condition of things, for it is a wrong condition of things. If justice sleeps let it not be because we have lulled it to sleep by our silence, our indifference, let it not be from lack of effort on our part. . . ."

Conscious Identification with Africa

The First African American Presbyterian congregation was founded in 1807 and named First African Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Beginning with First African, there

has been an intentional institutional, self-conscious identification with Africa.

The Rev. William Henry Sheppard went to the Belgian Congo in 1890 and was later joined by Lucy Gantt Sheppard. This son of a former slave, together with the son of a former slaveholder named Samuel Lapsley, established the first mission station in what was then the Congo: the American Presbyterian Mission in the Congo. Sheppard's missionary activities and gifts were extended in opposition to an exposure of the horrible and unjust acts that the Belgians committed against rubber workers. He was recognized in Brussels and London, and honored for his discoveries by being made a fellow in the Fellowship of the Royal Geographic Society of London.

Maria Fearing heard the call to missionary work in the Congo through William Sheppard in 1894. At age 56 she sold her small home to pay for travel to Luebo in the Congo, where she established the Pantops Home for girls. During her twenty years of service she returned twice to the United States. When she died at the age of 99 her will stipulated that her assets be sent to the mission in Luebo. Dr. and Mrs. Leander Swann have established **The Maria Fearing Fund for African and African American Partnerships in Mission.** At the Maria Fearing Fund breakfast during the National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC) conference in July 2003, Mr. Kadishi Leonard Ilunga, a Presbyterian from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was introduced. He learned of the work of "Mama Fearing" from his parents when he was growing up in the Congo. He is now organizing an immigrant congregation in New York City.

The Rev. James H. Robinson founded Operation Crossroads Africa, thought by many to be the inspiration for the Peace Corps. Crossroaders embody an indomitable sense of mission, alleviation of human misery, response

to a variety of human needs in many parts of the world, and ministry that sets people free. These "pick and shovel" Samaritans built bridges, roads, and homes in remote villages in Africa.

The legacy will continue. The words of the late Frank T. Wilson lead us into the future. "Black Presbyterians move to a continuing place of participation and representation."

From grateful recipients
To
Self-reliant contributors;
From faithful functionaries
To
Resourceful practitioners;
From crafty verbalizers
To
Committed craft persons;
From comfortable conformists
To
Creative catalysts;
From ruffled reactors
To
Forceful initiators

—Frank T. Wilson (*Periscope 2*, page 7)

More Bits and Pieces

Robert Washington



On the *Periscopes*

The role of Blacks in the Presbyterian Church has been highlighted in three journal issues: *Periscope 1*, 2, and 3. These issues have been dedicated to providing information about our beginnings, our present situation, and our moving with hope into the twenty-first century. The impact that Black Presbyterians have had on their church

has, in fact, challenged the church to examine its conscience and make changes that were endemic in its own responses that mirrored those of the greater society. The *Periscopes* have opened doors and given insight into the workings of Black Presbyterian organizations in its effort to “stay forever on the path,” fighting for justice and peace, with love as our sword.

On Black Presbyterians United (BPU)

In 1957 in Baltimore, the Afro-American Presbyterian Council of the North and West was dissolved. From that time until 1968 there was no national Black organization in the Presbyterian Church. Black Presbyterians United (BPU) was organized in 1968 in St. Louis. Blacks awaited a change in the larger church that would not have come about without the insistence of this component of the Presbyterian Church. At election time Clarence Cave gave a fiery speech, and everyone expected that he would nominate Edler Hawkins to be president. To everyone’s surprise, a young man named Tony Butts was elected president. Other officers elected were James Peterson, vice-president; Willie Tabor, secretary; and George B. Brooks, treasurer. With this team in place BPU set out on its mission.

We moved from the smoke-filled rooms of Dodge House in Washington, D.C., and from one coast to the other, introducing the membership to the locales from which members came. We liked moving about and sharing our diversity, talents, and spirit. We took the national meetings to our own colleges, involving the students of these institutions in our work. National meetings were held at Barber Scotia College in Concord, N.C. (twice); Knoxville College in Tennessee (twice); Charleston, S.C.; Atlanta; Memphis; Chicago; New Orleans; Los Angeles; Newark; Detroit; Pittsburgh; and Philadelphia (four times); and other places as well.

We made a difference at General Assembly. We took stands on issues that would affect the

country. Our voice had an impact on issues raised with Overture 141; Overture 41 gave birth to the Self-Development of People program; the Angela Davis issue was raised in 1971 in Rochester, N.Y.; we influenced the passing of Overture 5-88 dealing with racism in the church; and Overture 5-90 dealing with the Black man as an endangered species.

Little Known Facts

Overtures 9-90, 141, and 41 were submitted to the General Assembly by the Black Caucus. Funding for caucuses came out of the Program Agency under the direction of J. Oscar McCloud.

The National Cross Caucus came into being under the Program Agency while J. Oscar McCloud was director and Clarence Cave was on the staff.

Robert Washington was nominated and elected as a member of the GA Council from the floor of General Assembly.

Overture 41 to the General Assembly asked for \$3 million for Black Community Development. This program eventually became the Self-Development of People program.

General Assembly Memories

In responding to a question about what he would do for women if elected moderator in 1973, Clinton Marsh replied, “Nothing.”

HE WON!

Like other candidates, Clinton Marsh was asked how he felt about Reunion. His reply: “No comment.”

HE WON!

When asked in 1976 whether she was prepared to work with the General Assembly, Dr. Thelma Davidson Adair answered with a question: “Are you ready to work with me?”

SHE WON!

Black Moderators and Vice Moderators of General Assembly

Moderators

<i>Year</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Place of Election</i>
1964	Dr. Edler G. Hawkins, UPCUSA	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
1972	Dr. Clinton M. Marsh, UPCUSA	Omaha, Nebraska
1974	Dr. Lawrence Bottoms, PCUS	Louisville, Kentucky
1976	Dr. Thelma Adair, UPCUSA	Baltimore, Maryland
1983	Dr. James H. Costen, UPCUSA	Hartford, Connecticut
1989	Rev. Joan Salmon Campbell, PC(USA)	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1995	Elder Patricia Brown, PC(USA)	Syracuse, New York

Vice Moderators

1977	Rev. Robert Wood, UPCUSA	San Diego, California
1983	Rev. Joan Salmon Campbell, PC(USA)	Atlanta, Georgia
1992	Rev. Dorothy McKinney Wright, PC(USA)	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1994	Rev. J. Jerome Cooper, PC(USA)	Wichita, Kansas
1999	Rev. Floyd Rhodes, PC(USA)	Fort Worth, Texas
2003	Charles Easley, PC(USA)	Denver, Colorado

A Review of “Pragmatic Spirituality”

*A Concept Paper for NBPC by
Dr. Gayraud S. Wilmore*

Since Dr. Wilmore presented his concept paper at the 2003 meeting of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus in Baltimore, it—like almost everything he writes—has been seized upon by many as a fresh, clear, and timely reminder of the emphases that brought NBPC and the organizations that preceded into being. The paper has since been expanded into a book entitled, Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith through an Africentric Lens (New York University Press, 2004).

Wilmore defines *pragmatic spirituality* as “spirituality that is controlled by the Holy Spirit so as to effect an inward, contemplative regeneration, but also to effect an outward, concrete transformation of the context in which the individual must live, work, and bear

witness to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.” This definition implies four corresponding negations related to our historic Presbyterian commitment to social justice: (1) no praise without performance, (2) no peace without justice, (3) no reconciliation without liberation, and (4) no participation without power.

In relation to the first negation, *no praise without performance*, Dr. Wilmore observes that pragmatic spirituality is one “that draws strength from prayer and devotion to God, but urges people to get off their knees and join the struggle for the humanization and transformation of the world which God loved and for which Christ died” (John 3:16-17).

Of the second negation, *no peace without justice*, he says, “If middle-class Black Presbyterian congregations are not downtown every day working for justice in the welfare bureaucracy, the courts, and the halls of the legislature, they are simply bailing water from a sinking ship with a teaspoon.” This assertion remains a basic assumption of the civil rights struggle. It is a warning against those who, in

Jeremiah's words, cry, "Peace, peace when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14).

The third negation, *no reconciliation without liberation*, is one with which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) continues to struggle, especially in the area of race. The Confession of 1967, formulated at a time of great racial turmoil in America, had reconciliation as its primary focus and understood it to be the heart of the gospel. It lifted up this insight, but it did not succeed in keeping our church's focus on it. The Confession of 1967 is seldom heard today, and there is little discussion of racial reconciliation. Wilmore urges Blacks not to abandon the struggle, for he believes that "there can be no true fellowship at the altar without partnership in the public square," no reconciliation without liberation.

Finally, Wilmore asserts that there can be *no participation without power*. White liberals seem to take comfort in asserting that Blacks are the conscience of our society, thereby suggesting that in the struggle for social equity Blacks use this powerful weapon even though whites hold the economic and political power. Wilmore rejects this matching of powerless conscience against conscienceless power. He urges meaningful Black participation in the structures and processes of power. He also warns that we should not settle for a vague power of spiritualism while abandoning our responsibilities for temporal and ecclesiastical power.

Wilmore's warnings come at an especially appropriate time. Movements emphasizing "spirituality," "revival," and "praise" are washing over Black religious communities, including Presbyterian congregations. Wilmore's "pragmatic spirituality" is a healthy corrective balance. Without a commitment to justice and righteousness, the PC(USA) cannot become that "provisional demonstration of what God intends for all of humanity" of which the Constitution speaks (G-3.0200).

—Darius L. Swann

Reunion of Reunions

Vera P. Swann

From Dream to Reality



The dream of a reunion of Presbyterian-related schools and churches to celebrate the history and rich heritage of African American Presbyterians was inspired by National Black Presbyterian Women at a leadership training retreat at Lake Tahoe, Nevada, in June 1996. The retreat was hosted by NBPW women of Northern and Southern California. After the meeting Bettie Durrah, Thelma Adair, Ruby Houston Everett, and Vera Swann continued discussing this inspiring event. In their discussion the idea emerged of a reunion of all the educational institutions founded by the Presbyterian churches to serve African Americans. Each returned home to share with others the idea of a "Reunion of Reunions."

The Organizing Committee

In a short time a group was organized whose members believed that the celebration of the educational legacy of historic Black institutions was long overdue and that the legacy of these institutions, most over one hundred years old, must be preserved. Volunteers for the organizing committee were Robert L. Washington, Thelma Adair, Darius L. and Vera Swann, Bettie Durrah, Ruby Everett, David Wallace, George Brooks, Marie Metz, Franklin Colclough, James Ephraim, James Thomas, Rita Dixon, Pat Casey, and Mary N. Williams.

For nearly two years this committee identified the schools, and located persons who had attended the schools to serve as contacts. They sought middle governing body staff persons and local persons who could carry out the plans, found documents, and

solicited aid from the Presbyterian Historical Society. In addition, the committee gathered and preserved memorabilia; determined that the celebration date would precede the G.A. meeting in 1998, secured the cooperation of the General Assembly, and found funds to cover expenses.

The Event

The “Reunion of Reunions,” held in Charlotte June 11-13, 1998, was a miracle of cooperation, faith, and hard work by a large number of dedicated people from around the country.

“Bringing Forth the Fruit” was chosen as the theme for the Reunion. A six-page choreopoem for four readers, written by Bettie Durrah, was performed on opening night. This is an excerpt:

“Reunion of Reunions”

Gathered here to bear witness to the Fruits
Bear witness to educational pursuits
Bear witness to stellar careers
Bear witness to schools long closed but living
 on in the graduates
Bear witness to schools still providing
education; A seminary, . . . colleges,
Hospitals, churches . . . and more
Bring Forth the Fruit.

And they came from north, south, east, and west. More than three hundred people were registered from forty-nine of the schools. Many more who had come for General Assembly came to this pre-assembly event. It was a gathering of alumni, faculty, families, and friends of African American schools and colleges from all over the United States. The event provided the opportunity for rich fellowship, inspiration through worship, education through sharing of stories, exhibits and banners of each school, and celebrations through the recognition of accomplishments and evangelism through the pruning of the branches.

The event provided two dynamic worship experiences featuring a one-hundred-voice mass choir from local congregations and participation of men and women, lay and clergy, from across the Presbyterian church and other denominations.

The event also included:

1. A parade of banners representing many of the schools and colleges that led the opening worship procession.
2. Past moderators of the General Assembly, Thelma Adair and Clinton Marsh.
3. Tours to Brainerd Institute in Chester, S.C., Barber-Scotia College in Concord, N.C., and Johnson C. Smith University and Matthew Murkland Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, N.C.
4. Four dynamic workshops that provided historical information on African American Presbyterian schools and colleges.
5. Several audio-videotaping sessions that captured the stories of graduates of Black schools.
6. The Imani Village, featuring African American dancers and music, a soul food picnic with potato salad, fried chicken, and lemonade; a procession of the elders; and a sing-along of institutional and alma mater songs.
7. A presidential recognition banquet that honored Black schools and colleges currently operating, and presentation of prizes for the best school banners.
8. A dance party for all those who had enough energy left after a fabulous weekend of celebration.

The Reunion of Reunions Was the Genesis of a Vision Yet to Come

The vision is to establish an African American Presbyterian Heritage Center at Johnson C. Smith Seminary with a threefold goal of:

1. Establishing annual African American institutes that will educate seminarians, pastors, lay leaders, and others about the legacy of African American Presbyterians; the historic contributions of African

American congregations, schools, and leaders; the present and future opportunities for mission in the African American community.

2. Developing archives for the preservation of historical materials on African American Presbyterians and to collect, catalogue, and disseminate these materials.
3. Encouraging congregations to do research on their own histories.

Reunion of Congregations

On the wave of the enthusiasm and joy that arose in the wake of the Reunion of Reunions, there were people who said, "We must do this again." None was more insistent than Dr. Bob Washington, who conceived the idea of a Reunion of Congregations—a great gathering of Black Presbyterians from across the country. In his mind's eye was the great annual gathering of Black Presbyterians of the Southeast in the Workers' Conference in the years prior to 1951. The inspiration and fellowship of that annual gathering were the highlight of everyone's year. This gathering would be more comprehensive and include the entire country. It would draw the African American Presbyterian constituency together in a way that had not been possible since the Reunion eliminated the all-Black governing bodies in the 1980s.

No one worked harder than Bob Washington. Standing beside him was his wife, Dorothy, who did a lot of note taking, minute keeping, and correspondence. With them both was their daughter, Doreen. Dr. James Thomas and his staff in the office of the Presbytery of Charlotte were responsible for much of the day-to-day business and record keeping. Other members of the planning committee were Thelma Adair, George Brooks, Bettie J. Durrah, Ruby Everett, Vera P. Swann, and Darius L. Swann.

The event was planned in coordination with the annual meeting of the National Black

Presbyterian Caucus that was held at the Atlanta Airport Hilton Hotel. The all-day event was celebrated on Friday, June 28, 2002, and provided a fitting climax to the NBPC meeting. The day was filled with workshops, storytelling, recollections of history, and displays. The entire event was built around the theme "Celebrating the Heritage and the Hope." We remembered our history, with its great and not-so-great men and women, and planned for the future. The final act was a worship service that drew a standing-room-only crowd in the largest ballroom of the hotel. Music was supplied by two mass choirs, one from Charleston, South Carolina, and the other from Charlotte, North Carolina, and individual soloists. A procession of banners of churches began the service. Highlights of the service included Bob Washington's evocative message on our marvelous heritage and Bettie Durrah's challenging message on the hope before us. The service reached a climax with Dr. Franklin Colclough's rousing message on "Reclaiming the Spirit of Pentecost."

One of the lasting outcomes of the Reunion of Congregations was a collection of short histories of individual congregations. Some seventy-five churches sent their histories with pictures. These were edited by Darius L. Swann and collected in a loose-leaf binder so that others may be added in the future. These histories provide a fascinating insight into the varied circumstances out of which African American Presbyterian churches have emerged. They also shed light on the variety of characters who have peopled African American history, ecclesiastical and secular.

One of the important goals of the Reunion of Congregations was to renew the sense of connectedness of the Black constituency across the denomination and to awaken us all to the urgent necessity of recovering, recording, and preserving our history. A people who have no knowledge of their history cannot dream of their future.

An Ecumenical Challenge for African American Presbyterians

Eugene G. Turner



The purpose of this article is to reflect on how ecumenical involvement relates to the suffering endured over time by African American members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). African American

Presbyterians are so busy seeking acceptance within the ministry of the PC(USA) that they overlook many ecumenical aspects relevant to their struggle. While understandable, it is regrettable that this oversight persists after many decades of failing to acknowledge that the struggle for inclusion in the PC(USA) runs parallel to the same struggle by other African Americans in mainline churches. African American Presbyterians should be collaborating with African Americans in other mainline churches. Why isn't this happening? This question raises issues of church unity as well as race relations.

Churches are divided along organizational lines, whereas American Christians are divided along racial lines. African Americans should abhor these divisions and not accept the resulting behavior in either case.

Much history could be cited showing how attempts at inclusion of African Americans in Presbyterian churches have fared. Gayraud S. Wilmore's book, *Black and Presbyterian*, is an excellent reference. This work calls our attention to the proposal for uniting with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1906. At the time, segregation was the law of the land. Some in both the PC(USA) and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church wanted to follow the law of separation of the races in the newly merged church. The Presbyterian Church agreed to create a segregated governing body in order to

sustain the merger proposal. One can argue over whether the date of the cessation of this racial separation was 1973 when the United Presbyterian Church created regional synods, or 1983, at the time of Reunion between the northern and southern Presbyterian churches. A comprehensive history of the struggle of African Americans' efforts for full inclusion in the Presbyterian Church will show time and again that this community has not been given high priority by the church and has been sacrificed in order to accomplish the goals of others.

The point of revisiting the events following 1906 is to show that we dare not think that ecumenical relations can be excluded from concern for racial justice in the Presbyterian Church. Some act as though we will have been successful in the pursuit of justice and inclusiveness when we reach full inclusion in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This is far from the truth. All mainline churches participate in the practices of racial exclusion, as do ecumenical bodies.

Why is it that African American Presbyterians are reluctant to expend energy in the search for Christian unity? The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has officially agreed to enter into a relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ. The official document creating this relationship is "A Formula of Agreement." All four churches have agreed that they are separate institutions but are one in their understanding of the Church of Jesus Christ. This agreement stops short of the merger doorway. Short of merger, how can we fix problems of racial inclusion and injustice within the Presbyterian Church alone? How can we address current and future circumstances now confronting African Americans in the church and in society?

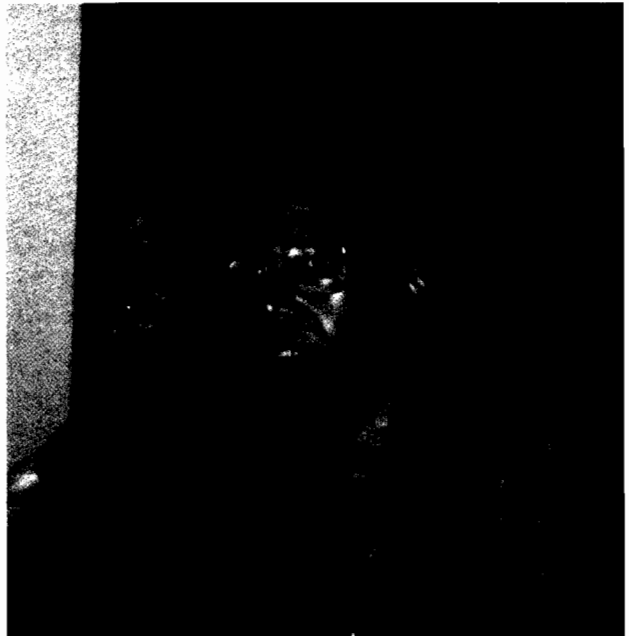
What escapes most African American Presbyterians is that their experience has much to contribute to a reformulation of Presbyterian understanding of the meaning and purpose of

the church. Reformed theology and its strongly exploratory theology, coupled with African Americans' long-suffering as a minority, are seldom linked when African Americans are absent from



ecumenical discussions. There is no doubt that churches will eventually arrive at unity, no matter how painstaking the journey. In the North American context, where race is a major dimension of lived reality in the church, ecumenical relationships broaden the opportunity to correct exclusionary practices of the Presbyterian and other mainline churches.

Some may argue that ecumenism does not matter to African American Presbyterians because we have no long-range future in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). On the contrary, African Americans are inextricably linked to all mainline churches, as well as to the historically African American churches, because Jesus Christ directed us to mutual recognition and responsibility in his call that we should seek to be one. Separating Christian churches for whatever reason is a human endeavor not consistent with God's intention.



Surely African American Presbyterians must continue in their diligence to bend the church at its knees in recognition of its continuing exclusion of African Americans in the total life of the church. African Americans dare not cease this pursuit, for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a significant participant in the ecumenical movement. Its influence in building more just and inclusive churches is a cause and calling in which African American Presbyterians can play a strongly commanding role. If African American Presbyterians excuse themselves from ecumenical deliberations, they will make no impact at all.

On Black Presbyterian Organizations



“The last shall be first; the first shall be last,” the Scriptures say.

You challenged the notion of inclusivity of privilege.

Racism, classism, too.

You shared and thus expanded the sacred Table with other brothers and sisters of color.

Forming caucuses, cross-caucuses, new networks, new coalitions, new paradigms for ministry.

Your presence around the table makes a difference.

You ask the questions.

Your visible presence makes a bold statement.

Sometimes it is our silent witness.

Bold witnesses.

Go boldly, therefore, through the twenty-first century.

*Excerpt from **Breakthroughs and Challenges**, pp. 7-9*

Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations

Gayraud S. Wilmore

1856 *The Evangelical Association of Colored Ministers of Congregational and Presbyterian Churches.* By the end of the 1850s this organization had changed its name to Association of Colored Ministers of Presbyterian and Congregational Churches and had twenty members—mainly Presbyterians. The group was organized five years before the Civil War by Elymas Rogers, H. H. Garnet, and J. W. C. Pennington at the Shiloh Presbyterian Church of New York City.

1894 *The Afro-American Presbyterian Council.* This post-war renewal of the solidarity of Black Presbyterians took place at the First African Church of Philadelphia. Matthew Anderson and Francis Grimke, both of whom had opposed union with the Southern Church in the 1880s, were the primary founders.

The Council changed its name to the *Afro-American Presbyterian Council* of the North and West in the 1930s. At the time Blacks in the South were already caucusing in four African American synods: Catawba, Atlantic, Blue Ridge, and Canadian.

1957 After 57 years of uninterrupted existence, the Council voted to dissolve in premature anticipation that racial integration would soon come as a result of the 1954 school desegregation decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, which ended “separate but equal” laws.

1963 *Concerned Presbyterians.* This caucus was actually a reversal of the 1957 decision. Bryant George and Edler G. Hawkins called Black Presbyterians together, with white allies, to help elect Hawkins as the first African American to become Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church.

1968 *Black Presbyterians United.* Formed by Edler G. Hawkins, Thelma Adair, and others in response to the new militancy of the civil rights movement. E. Wellington (Tony) Butts, pastor of Bethany Church in Englewood, New Jersey, was elected its first president.

1988 *The National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC).* It brought together into a single group African American women and men from the United Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in the United States, following reunion.

National Black Presbyterian Caucus: Achievements, Opportunities, and Challenges

Curtis A. Jones



The National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC) has been in existence since 1988. Other organizational entities, such as Black Presbyterians United and Concerned Black Presbyterians, predated NBPC. The need for Black Presbyterian organizations is deeply rooted in the struggle for justice and full inclusion within the Presbyterian Church and greater American culture.

Much has happened in the years since the organization's establishment. Many leaders from within its ranks have made significant contributions to the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Such leaders include Edler G. Hawkins, great church statesman and former Moderator of the General Assembly; Dr. James Costen, dean of Johnson C. Smith Seminary and later president of the Interdenominational Theological Center; Mildred Brown, elder and outstanding churchwoman; the Rev. Dr.

Lawrence Bottoms, Moderator of the PCUS Church; and Lenten Gunn, pastor and president of NBPC.

But what about today? Given the many notable advances within our denomination, the evidence of Blacks in leadership positions at national and middle-governing body levels, and several vibrant Black Presbyterian congregations, one might question: Why is a Black caucus needed? Indeed, even many Blacks have questioned the necessity.

The key to understanding the *raison d'être* of the NBPC is revealed in answering the question: "Where would the PC(USA) be without NBPC?"

Under the old United Presbyterian structure, many African Americans served as heads of national ministry units. The means of positioning, nurturing, and directing African Americans toward leadership roles was the relationship building and purposeful development of opportunities initiated by those African Americans serving at the national level. They were able to affect change and make it happen. Much of the "power" (i.e., the ability to impact denominational direction, decision-making capability, and participation in the core denominational leadership teams) that went along with these positions was lost through reunion as well as through restructuring and downsizing of national staff. Consequently, we witnessed African American Presbyterians slowly losing the ability to create opportunities for leadership and power within the denomination. However, we cannot simply lament and mourn the reality of these changes. We have to move forward and participate in the creation of future avenues for transformation.

Since becoming Executive Director of NBPC and in consultation with the NBPC board and membership, we have targeted several areas. These are initiatives that affect not only NBPC members, but also the congregations to which our members belong, the communities in which they live, and the

diverse and dynamic nature of our denomination as well. Some of the initiatives planned and undertaken are listed below.

We continue to be engaged with the Office of Black Congregational Enhancement under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Rita Dixon, who is helping Black pastors to shape a vision and foster a concern for evangelism and church growth. Our work with pastors and congregational leaders focuses on transformation rather than maintenance.

Empowerment and transformation are the keys. It is possible to transform a maintenance-oriented parish into one of empowerment. We must not be mired in a service-oriented mentality. Instead we must ensure that the product of our witness includes the power to affect change. We must claim the power to address systemic evil and injustice at every level within our local, national, and global communities.

Global Mission

During my tenure as NBPC President (1997-2003), we had a great desire to support and grow the presence of African Americans in global mission. We therefore entered into a covenant relationship with the Worldwide Ministries Division (WMD) under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Marian McClure. This relationship has already yielded much. Our desire has long been to have an authentic relationship with Africa, not merely brief cultural experiences. We are seeking to express a prophetic witness that speaks truth to power, even if confronting corrupt African leadership. We do not want to project an idealized image of Africa; rather we feel it is our duty to commit ourselves to that continent from which our bloodline originates and that which is the birthplace of the human species.

We have previously been afforded an opportunity in Kenya for relationship building through a pilot project with WMD involving ten African American Presbyterian young adults and ten Kenyan Presbyterian young

adults. They shared ministry experiences in Bible study, outreach, and personal relations. We influenced potential African American seminary candidates with a global ministry experience that left an imprint on their lives.

In the spring of 2003 two of our members, the Rev. Otis Smith and Elder Libby Brown, traveled to Malawi on behalf of WMD's International Health Office and NBPC. They visited with several presbyteries and projects in an effort to learn more about what Malawians are doing to care for their citizens who suffer from HIV/AIDS, particularly home-based care initiatives. NBPC has adopted as a major program emphasis the *0.7% Initiative to Eradicate Diseases of Poverty in Africa*. We have committed 0.7% of our budget to this initiative, and we have encouraged our chapters and churches to assemble home-based care kits for the benefit of HIV/AIDS sufferers in Malawi.

Relations with Middle Governing Bodies

Recognizing the importance for African American congregations and leaders to be fully engaged with middle governing bodies, we are encouraging and building opportunities for proactive effective participation. Plans are presently under way to produce a resource to assist chapter presidents and chapters to be more effective in working with presbyteries. This resource will include strategic planning and budgeting. It is our hope that chapters will begin to do long-term planning rather than immediate crisis maintenance.

Annual Convention

NBPC annual conventions offer an unparalleled opportunity for African American Presbyterians. It is the largest annual gathering of African American Presbyterians. The 2002 and 2003 events had the largest number of attendees ever (approximately seven hundred each year). The national convention provides attendees a venue for spiritual formation, idea sharing, visioning, theological inquiry, strategic planning, learning techniques for evangelism,

leadership development, congregational transformation, varied worship experiences, and fellowship. This convention benefits our churches, our communities, and, consequently, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

We have placed a major emphasis on our youth over the past several years. A young adult component has also risen within our ranks. The future vitality of NBPC and of the PC(USA) lies with these groups. We must provide the tools necessary for their development as clergy and laypersons, as congregational and denominational leaders, equipping them to be theologically sound and empowered for change and growth. At the 2003 National Convention, the Circle of Elders was established as a recognized component of NBPC, affording us even greater access to and benefit of the wisdom of those who have forged the way thus far for African American participation in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

We work closely with the Office of African American Leadership Development through the Rev. Stephany Graham. One example of this partnership is the establishment of the Christian Educators Urban Institute, a project designed to identify and train African American Christian Educators. This project has also birthed the African Heritage Presbyterian Association of Musicians (AHPAM). We have collaborated with this office in producing a video titled, *The Changing Face of the African American Church: Ministry to Young Adults*. The establishment of this office fulfilled a dream of many who had long recognized the need for a staff person who would be responsible for resource development. We are thankful for the vision and hard work of people like Mildred Brown, Rita Dixon, and Jim Reese, Gayraud Wilmore, and many, many others.

Self-Reliance

The National Black Presbyterian Caucus strives for self-reliance. Traditionally, funding for our expenses has come from annual membership fees as well as from the national

budget of the Racial Ethnic Ministries program area. However, if we are truly to be leaders within the denomination and shape the direction of the church, and if we desire unfettered freedom relative to shaping congregational transformation, then we must first support ourselves and our mission. This responsibility is incumbent upon every African American Presbyterian.

The recent election of the Rev. Dr. Jerry Cannon as president of NBPC has signaled a new emphasis on youth and young adult ministry. Dr. Cannon is committed to strengthening our chapters and has challenged the membership to grow by 400 percent by the end of 2004. This is a bold, yet achievable initiative. Plans are presently under way to achieve this objective.

Geo-Political Front

The challenges before the caucus cover the full gamut of the theological and geo-political perspective. Unresolved ecclesiastical issues of the past and emerging social contradictions related to race dot the contextual horizon of the inheritors of the John Gloucester Philadelphia experiment. The changing balance of power in the world, increasing expressions of resentment directed at the West by two-thirds of the world, and the relative silence of Black Presbyterians on topics such as AIDS in Africa, debt relief, Western political and economic aggression, uncritical support of Israel, and indefensible alliances by the American government with some of the most corrupt dictators in the world have contributed to an atmosphere of suspicion by many people of color in oppressed countries. During the 1960s and 1970s the church—and the Black church in particular—led the world in the outcry for peace and justice. The public stature of religious leaders and the subsequent credibility derived from social protest fueled by faith became the defining marks of Christianity. These characteristics of biblical faith and social righteousness are embodied in the personalities of Dr. Thelma Adair, Dr. Gayraud S. Wilmore, Dr.

Darius L. Swann, and Vera Swann. When I travel to oppressed countries, the questions often raised are, “Where is the voice of the African American community today?” and “Do you care about our struggle?”

Spirituality and Church Growth

NBPC provides leadership in the development and implementation of the paper titled “Racial/Ethnic and New Immigrant Evangelism and Church Growth Strategy” that was adopted by the 1998 General Assembly. Over the past eight years the board, working in partnership with the Office of Black Congregational Enhancement, has generated a growing enthusiasm within the African American constituency for church growth and evangelism. Though the leaders are largely motivated by fear of church closings and the possible end of an era, the resurgence of concern for the growth of their congregations is expectant with promise. At the center of the dialogue around growth is the often-misunderstood conception of spirituality.

Spirituality in the West is usually reduced to a dimension of inward piety and well-being, a transcendent state of contextual detachment where tranquility is an escape rather than a revelation from God. Such expressions of spirituality are usually apolitical, and very private and personal. True, Christian spirituality is personal, but not private. Spirituality is relational, with God and our neighbors. The old African proverb captures this relational model: “I sought my God, and my God I could not see, I sought myself and self eluded me, I sought my neighbor, and found all three” (Matt. 25:40). The best example of spirituality is represented in the life and witness of Jesus Christ, in which righteous and just relationships are equally yoked. In the Greek New Testament the word for justice and righteousness is “dikaiosyne.” There is no differentiation made between righteousness and justice. Hence, to be a righteous Christian implies that one must “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with

your God” (Mic. 6:8). Any attempt to bifurcate a righteous inward state of being and external social justice witness is merely an adulteration of the gospel. As James stated, “faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (James 2:17). Dr. Gayraud S. Wilmore addressed this matter in his recent paper, “Pragmatic Spirituality.” In defining pragmatic spirituality, one might say that it is a spirituality that is controlled by the Holy Spirit so as to effect an inward, contemplative regeneration, but also to effect an outward, concrete transformation of the context in which the individual must live, work, and bear witness to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Pragmatic spirituality was a defense mechanism of the Black churches against the spiritualization by certain White Christians of Christianity as being inward, personal, and otherworldly.

Advocacy Committee on Racial Ethnic Concerns

Additional contributions of the Caucus are reflected in its work on the Advocacy Committee on Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC). Through its representative to this committee, NBPC introduced three important recommendations that resulted in the creation of a General Assembly task force on entities, reparations, and elections. Concerned about the diminishing presence of racial ethnic persons in upper management positions, NBPC and ACREC have obtained General Assembly approval for the creation of a task force to address the absence of racial ethnic persons in upper management positions in the various entities of the Presbyterian Church (i.e., the Board of Pensions, the Presbyterian Foundation, the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, and the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program). In all of those entities, African Americans are employed as support staff. However, in upper management positions, they are under-represented. With respect to the budgets of the General Assembly entities, racial ethnic vendors and African American businesspeople are likewise under-represented. The second task

force, examining the issue of reparations, is scheduled to present its report to the General Assembly in 2004. It is our anticipation that the work of this task force can aid the church in the process of reconciliation by addressing past grievances. The third and final task force was created to address the sad saga of the 2000 presidential election in the United States. George Bush was declared president; however, many African Americans were disenfranchised in the electoral process. In several states, those convicted of felonies are not allowed to vote even if they have served their sentences or paid their fines. This practice disproportionately affects African Americans. It is our hope that this task force will offer constructive suggestions to remedy this situation.

Multicultural Movement

The recent interest in multiculturalism by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is to be applauded. For too long the Western Eurocentric model has distorted the reality of the diverse demographics of the United States. The U.S. is neither monocultural nor monoracial, and the Church of Jesus Christ needs to reflect this Pentecost reality. Many African American churches regard themselves as monocultural and monoracial, but in reality they are not. Every African American church is multiracial. Whether by intentional miscegenation or the forced mixings of bloodlines during slavery, the result has been a multiracial construct that we have come to recognize as the African American constituency. Therefore, if any group of people has a legitimate right to participate in the multicultural dialogue, it is African Americans. NBPC and African American Presbyterians can ill afford to sit on the sidelines of the multicultural movement within the ecclesia or the nation. This movement speaks to the very essence of the racial contradiction in America, as well as the potential to reframe the dialogue of racial tolerance.

It is a sad reality that many African immigrants come to this country and find it

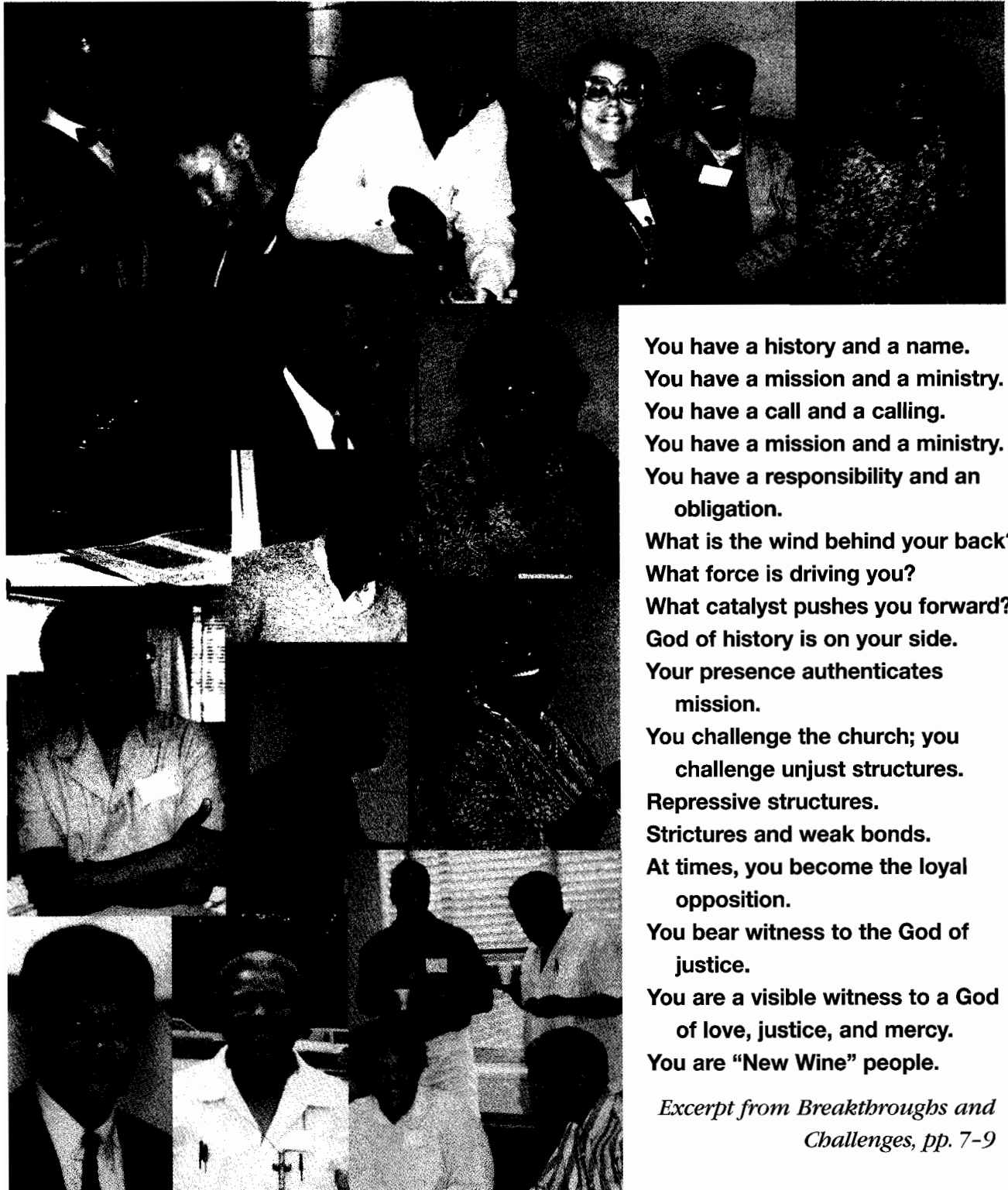
easier to relate to and build partnerships with Caucasian congregations than with African American congregations. African American Presbyterians must look deep into their hearts and souls to discover why this situation exists. We must prayerfully seek solutions and welcome immigrant partnerships.

As I indicated in my report to the 2003 convention, I am convinced that we can make an even greater positive impact, not only within our denomination, but also within the communities in which we are located throughout the global community, especially Africa. We must be strategic in our thinking and planning, prudent in our implementation and utilization of resources, and unwavering in

our commitment. Partnering with one another toward the greater good is key.

While the above challenges are numerous, they also represent great opportunity. Black Presbyterians have the capacity, the witness, and the love not only to transform our congregations, but also to transform the world. Whether we bury our talents in a hole or trust God to multiply our gifts is the issue before us. We have a great legacy; we have an even greater future. Jesus called it eternity. The invitation is there for every Black Presbyterian—for every Presbyterian—to let his or her light shine. It is my sincere prayer that NBPC will be a light to the world and to all of God's people.

General Assembly African American Offices and Ministry Resources



**You have a history and a name.
You have a mission and a ministry.
You have a call and a calling.
You have a mission and a ministry.
You have a responsibility and an
obligation.**

**What is the wind behind your back?
What force is driving you?
What catalyst pushes you forward?
God of history is on your side.
Your presence authenticates
mission.**

**You challenge the church; you
challenge unjust structures.**

Repressive structures.

Strictures and weak bonds.

**At times, you become the loyal
opposition.**

**You bear witness to the God of
justice.**

**You are a visible witness to a God
of love, justice, and mercy.**

You are "New Wine" people.

*Excerpt from Breakthroughs and
Challenges, pp. 7-9*



The Black Congregational Enhancement Office

L. Rita Dixon

In the Beginning: A Brief History of African American Presbyterian Congregations



The African American constituency has a long history in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and a great heritage of discipleship and witness in every area of the denomination's mission. African Americans have been members of

Presbyterian churches since the mid-1700s. The first members were slaves of Presbyterian families who worshiped on the segregated balconies of their owners' churches. The first African American congregation—named First African Presbyterian—was developed in 1807 in Philadelphia Presbytery to provide ministry to African Americans who were newly freed from slavery. John Gloucester, a former slave of a Presbyterian minister who had instructed him in the Presbyterian faith and doctrine, was the organizing pastor. Other congregations followed First African during the latter part of the nineteenth through the twentieth century. African Americans initiated most of them. A discussion of some of these congregations can be found in *Periscope* issues 1 and 2.

All-Black governing bodies were established while many African American congregations in the South, in both the northern and southern streams, were being developed. Some of them were organized as early as 1868 with congregations that began as early as 1860. *All-Black Governing Bodies: The History and Contributions of All-Black Governing Bodies in the Predecessor Denominations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, a book published by the Office of the General Assembly in 1993, provides an account of this history of African American church growth

in the South. The first African American congregations in the West began somewhat later. In general, most of the congregations and governing bodies were marginalized from the mainstream life of the denomination until the late 1950s or early 1960s.

Many of these congregations survived and some flourished until the mid-1960s or early 1970s. As a result of the many forms of protest against segregation and racism during the 1960s civil rights activities, public institutions dropped their segregated policies and African Americans were allowed to participate in American life more fully. Great changes took place in the society as a whole. Decline in church membership began in mainline denominations. During the early 1980s, leaders from the former southern and northern streams of the PC(USA) began working through the process of reunion from the split that occurred before the Civil War because of disagreement over the emancipation of the slaves. African American leaders became alarmed at the declining number of African American members in both streams of the denomination. This was also true for leaders of other historic racial ethnic groups. Racial ethnic leaders worked together to address this decline through the new denomination's design for mission.

The 1986 Structural Design for Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) included a Racial Ethnic Ministry Unit composed of two program areas: Racial Justice and Congregational Enhancement. Racial justice had been a prominent part of the ministry of both the southern and northern streams of the PC(USA) since the mid-1960s and had made a major impact on every facet of the denomination's mission. The struggle for racial justice was directly responsible for the emerging visibility of other racial ethnic groups within the PC(USA). The Racial Ethnic Congregational Enhancement Offices, the new kids on the block, represented a new focus on racial ethnic congregations. Five offices were created to serve the African American, Asian,

Korean, Hispanic, and Native American constituencies. Only the Korean constituency was growing in the denomination at that time. The other four constituencies, similar to the denomination as a whole, were declining in numbers and mission; thus, the mission of the congregational enhancement offices was to strengthen racial ethnic congregations in the areas of redevelopment, new church development, leadership development, evangelism, and culturally relevant resources for ministry. Each of these constituencies faced different opportunities and challenges in strengthening their witness within the PC(USA). Staff for most of these offices was hired in 1988 when the newly united denomination moved to the national headquarters to Louisville, Kentucky, from Atlanta, Georgia, and New York City.

A New Beginning: The Office of Black Congregational Enhancement

The first challenge for the Office of Black Congregational Enhancement was to understand the reasons for the decline in African American membership and to provide leadership to the connectional church system in reversing the decline. Reasons for the decline in membership, in general, are complex and are even more so for Black Christians in predominantly white denominations.

In 1998 a revised edition of the Rev. Dr. Gayraud S. Wilmore's book, *Black and Presbyterian: The Heritage and the Hope* (Witherspoon Press), was published. Wilmore, the esteemed Black Presbyterian theologian and church historian, was the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Professor and Director of Black Church Studies Program at Colgate Rochester Divinity School. He was commissioned to write the first edition by Black Presbyterians United (the national caucus in the northern stream of the denomination) to celebrate 175 years of Black Presbyterianism in the United States and to help Black Presbyterians become aware of their great heritage in the Presbyterian Church.

That edition was published just before the great celebration of the reunion of the two former streams of the PC(USA), and it provided a foundation for developing the mission of the Office of Black Congregational Enhancement.

One of the major theses of the Wilmore book is that middle-class Black Christians in mainline denominations such as Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Lutheran, and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America suffer from identity crises. These denominations are expressive of white control, power, culture, values, and religious style. Black people in such denominations are marginalized. In the past Blacks suffered the same racism and segregation in the church that permeated the larger society. Because of their involvement with the white power structure of the denomination, Black Presbyterians assimilated into the styles of preaching, music, liturgy, praying, and congregational life of whites rather than those of the Black community. They are confused in their identities, which are neither Black nor white but somewhere between. Many Black Christians in white denominations are happily unaware of this confusion and have either consciously or unconsciously bought into white middle-class Christianity. In their identity and religious life, they are alienated from the mainstream of the Black community.

In contrast, Wilmore says, Christians in independent Black denominations, such as the Black Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, and others have an historical Black consciousness in their religious lives that is not entangled with white power, control, or religious lifestyle. They did not inherit their buildings from white churches and do not depend on white mission dollars for survival. They have a long, historical memory of their denominational leaders, conventions, and other events in which no white people were involved. They are immersed in the culture of the Black community and are continually making adjustments to change without losing continuity with the past. Their worship and

congregational styles are reflective of and attractive to most of the people in the African American community. One of these Black denominations can start a new church that will thrive in the same community where another Black church in a predominantly white denomination has just closed.

Black and Presbyterian identifies five resources from historic Black Christianity that Black Presbyterians need to claim as a basis for ministry in the Black community. They are:

- personal and group freedom from white control through Jesus Christ as Liberator
- the image of Africa as the land of origin for African Americans
- the will of God for social justice
- creative style and artistry in styles of preaching, praying, music, testimonies, and general behavior
- the unity of secular and sacred in religious and everyday life

Wilmore envisions a new style of Black Presbyterianism in which the leadership models an intentional Black consciousness that reflects these values of the Black Christian tradition and full participation in the Presbyterian connectional system in faithfulness to Presbyterian polity. This vision includes congregational lifestyles that embody these values in worship, Christian education, evangelism, and community outreach ministries.

The Wilmore analysis is the foundation on which the Black Congregational Enhancement (BCE) office began to build its ministry in 1988. It worked in close partnership with the Office of Racial and Cultural Diversity (RACD) in the Evangelism and Church Development Ministry Unit.

In January 1990 the BCE Office and the RACD held a consultation involving pastors from twelve African American congregations that were growing in numbers or that had shown some signs of being ready for growth and Black staff members from middle governing bodies. The consultation was held in a Black-owned villa in Jamaica, West Indies.

This largely Black island provided a fitting context in which to reflect on the status of the Black Presbyterian witness. The leadership led the group through a design that immersed participants in Black Presbyterian history of evangelism and church development and an examination of strategies employed by these growing congregations that were effective in their communities. From this consultation on the vitality, health, ministry, and membership in African American congregations, the operative words for the future became “Black heritage, empowerment, and growth.” Five directions emerged for the ministry of the BCE Office: 1. the development of an African American Advisory Committee to offer suggestions for ministry development, 2. the continuation of Black heritage education to address the identity crisis explored by Wilmore, 3. advocacy for Black staff functions at all levels of the church, 4. Africentric evangelism and church growth training for leaders of African American congregations, and 5. the development of Africentric resources to support ministry. Some of the ministries that have been initiated in each area over the past fifteen years will be described very briefly. They are implemented in collaboration with other agencies of the General Assembly, middle governing bodies, Johnson C. Smith University, ecumenical partners, and the National Black Presbyterian Caucus.

The African American Advisory Committee

The African American Advisory Committee (AAAC) was appointed by the Racial Ethnic Ministry Unit and the Evangelism and Church Development Unit to assist the Black Congregational Enhancement and the Racial and Cultural Diversity offices to implement effective programs of redevelopment, new church development, evangelism, community outreach, resource development, and other related ministries to strengthen the Black Presbyterian witness. The committee held its first meeting in December 1990 and produced

a vision paper, "The Balm in Gilead Report: A Mission Challenge to Enhance African American Congregational Life and Leadership Empowerment within Our Denomination." The committee's initial sense of mission is captured in the following:

Statement of Problem

The status of the African American witness to the love and liberation of Jesus Christ from within Presbyterianism today is far from reaching its potential to address critical issues within the Black community at large. A range of sociopolitical, criminal justice, health, educational, and economic concerns, as well as spiritual challenges continue to adversely affect African American communities throughout our nation. What does the spiritual heritage of Black Presbyterians and, more important, the Black Presbyterian congregational witness today have to say to these concerns? "Is there a balm in Gilead?"

The committee envisioned an empowered Black Presbyterian witness within the PC(USA), built on the Black Presbyterian heritage of fighting for racial justice, reconciliation, and love for all people. Between 1991 and 1994 five consultations were held within presbyteries to share the committee's vision for empowered congregations. They involved presbytery leaders, pastors, and lay leaders of African American congregations.

The consultations allowed the pastors and lay leaders to voice their many concerns. Some of the themes that emerged were as follows:

- Conflict between pastors and lay leaders over the mission of the church
- Leaders holding a legalistic mind-set about Presbyterian polity and ways of doing things
- A belief that European styles and traditions are superior to those of other cultures
- Leaders placing a high value on an African American middle-class identity with no interest in establishing a relationship with the poor and marginalized people in the church's community
- Leaders' lack of knowledge about the Black Presbyterian legacy or Black history in general
- Negative attitudes about Black or African American identity, Black religious heritage, Africa, or African heritage
- Alienation of African American congregations from both the Black community and the denomination, and low self-esteem of leaders in both contexts
- Leaders' failure to assign priorities to spiritual growth, evangelism, or outreach ministries
- A feeling of disrespect from the denomination and the Black community
- The lack of a sense of historical place in the new racial ethnic leadership mix of the PC(USA)
- Low-energy worship experiences that do not inspire or meet the needs of worshipers
- Declines in worship participation, church-related activities, membership, and pastoral leadership

In these consultations the committee held separate meetings with representatives from the presbytery's church development committees and staff to share their vision and to advocate for African American new church development projects and the redevelopment of existing churches. The presbytery leaders stated that they did not have the knowledge or will to empower African American congregations. There was very little interest in the committee's vision.

In 1994 the committee issued a controversial paper titled, "Is This New Wine?" It called Black Presbyterians to a stronger and healthier Black identity rooted in respect for African and African American heritage and to a loving family relationship with the hurting, poor, and marginalized people in Black communities. Further, the paper stated that if Black Presbyterian leaders thought that Presbyterian polity prevented them from making this commitment they should withdraw from the PC(USA) and form their own denomination. The paper generated a lot of discussion within the

denomination, particularly between the older and younger generations of Black Presbyterians. The African American Advisory Committee continues to play a major leadership role in the implementation of church growth strategies and has become a source of leadership for the National Black Presbyterian Caucus. Both the current and former president, who have provided leadership for the caucus for the past eight years, were leaders of the AAAC.

Black Heritage Education

The BCE office developed several approaches to educate leaders on Black heritage. One was to write position papers and articles on the history, heritage, and gifts of Black Presbyterians. Several papers were written between 1990 and 1996 to help leadership groups become more aware of African American Presbyterian heritage. They were used in the office's consultations on the directions for evangelism and church development ministries for African American congregations. The BCE office continues to write articles for publication on the culture, gifts, and contributions of Black Presbyterians. They appear in *The Torch*, *National Black Presbyterian Caucus News*, and office publications, on the web site, and in other sources as opportunities arise. An African American heritage emphasis is included in all leader-training events.

Another approach was to provide opportunities for leaders to have an educational experience in Africa. The BCE office held a leadership experience for the AAAC in Ghana, West Africa, in 1995. They lived in the homes of Ghanaians for several days. This immersion in African heritage and current realities strengthened the leaders' understanding of an African identity. It was the first of many other African experiences for leaders, most of them undertaken in partnership with the Religious Heritage of the African World at the Interdenominational Theological Center. These experiences provided a great understanding of African

countries, their differences and similarities, their past and present economic and cultural realities, as well as the struggles they have in common with African Americans. They helped to correct the romantic views some leaders had about Africa. In 2001 the BCE office, in partnership with the National Black Presbyterian Caucus and the Worldwide Ministries Division, engaged some African American leaders in a study of Black heritage in Brazil. This was an eye-opening experience on the export of African slaves to other countries and the development of African culture somewhere other than in North America. Currently, a few congregations are sponsoring heritage educational expeditions in Africa and elsewhere. One major outcome of these educational pilgrimages is the current NBPC strategy to work with Worldwide Ministries Division on AIDS in Africa Project. The BCE office and NBPC are working to promote relationships between African American leaders and congregations and the new African immigrant leaders and congregations with the hope that they will develop joint strategies to address common issues.

A third approach was to develop a Black Presbyterian Heritage Colloquium in partnership with Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary. Three colloquiums were held involving leaders from African American congregations. The leaders were identified from each synod by Black staff, NBPC leaders, and the African American Advisory Committee. The goal was to help African American leaders become more aware of Presbyterian heritage, gifts, and contributions. Many of the leaders have come into the PC(USA) from other denominations or through predominantly white seminaries. They have had little contact with Black Presbyterian leaders and are not aware of this heritage. Some persons who had been born into families with generations of background knew only their experience of this heritage but not the larger story. The BCE office and Johnson C. Smith provided the

colloquiums, the first on evangelism in 1991, the second on leadership in 1993, and the third on spiritual growth in 1996. A fourth colloquium on Black Presbyterian schools and colleges founded by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to meet the needs of African Americans freed from slavery was sponsored by the Reunion of Reunions Committee in 1998. The BCE Office was a partner in planning the colloquium.

The BCE office makes available several resources on the Black Presbyterian heritage. In addition to the resources already mentioned, the following publications have been promoted by the office: *Periscope 1, 2, and 3*; *Lest We Forget: Black Presbyterians in Ministry* (providing biographical sketches of African American Presbyterians between 1800 and 1950); *Edler Hawkins: Racial Justice and the Church* (a 1987 edition of *Church & Society*); *Stories about Ethiopia* (reflections by participants in the 1997 Study Travel Institute of the All African Conference of Churches' Seventh General Assembly); and *African Roots: Towards an Afrocentric Christian Witness* (published in 1994, a collection of articles by various scholars on African heritage).

Black Staff Functions

One of the directions for the BCE office and the AAAC was to create a position on Black Christian education in the denomination. The vision for this position was the empowerment of the Christian education ministry in African American congregations, especially as it relates to passing on Black heritage through Christian education. An equally important focus was to infuse the denomination's curriculum resources with Black culture and contributions. In 1996 the General Assembly appointed a task force to research the need for a Black Christian educator staffed by the BCE office. Gayraud Wilmore wrote the foundation paper for the task force, *The Nature and Task of Christian Education from an African American*

Presbyterian Perspective. In 1998 an African American staff person was hired for the position of African American Leadership and Resource Development in the Christian Education program area of Congregational Ministries Division. The Evangelism and Church Development program area hired an African American presbytery staff person in a part-time position as a consultant on congregational transformation (redevelopment) ministries in 2000. In 2003 an African American was hired as a consultant in the position of Racial Ethnic Recruitment and Referrals and Matching in the Churchwide Personnel Services program area.

Evangelism and Church Growth Ministries

The direction for the BCE office was firmly set on church growth by 1995, and the office played a major role in the development of the Racial Ethnic/New Immigrant Evangelism and Church Development Strategy Paper that was adopted by the 208th and 210th General Assemblies in 1996 and 1998, respectively. Church growth meant growth in spirituality, ministry, and membership. The initial strategy of the BCE office in addressing church growth was to focus on spiritual renewal and evangelism training for pastors of existing congregations who wanted to grow and to use their success with growth to motivate and help other congregations to grow. The major challenge in church growth was that neither African American leaders nor presbytery leaders believed that African American congregations could grow. In general there was a great sense of both apathy and denial about church growth in the entire denomination. The BCE office increased its emphasis on lay leadership training for church growth ministry in 1999. Between 1996 and 2003 the office and its partners provided at least one national Africentric training event annually and supported many evangelism, redevelopment, and new church development training events offered by presbyteries, synods, General Assembly agencies, and NBPC regions and chapters. There is a

heightened excitement about spirituality and ministry among congregational leaders. The number of growing congregations is increasing. In 1990 fewer than ten African American congregations were growing, about three of which had approximately five hundred members. Today approximately fifty congregations show signs of numerical growth. Most of them have experienced small increases in members, and three have memberships around one thousand. More important than the numerical growth is the larger number of congregations that report the growth of discipleship of leaders and the increase in congregational mission. A small number of stable African American congregations have continued to maintain their own and provide leadership to the denomination.

The BCE office is now engaged in a partnership with NBPC to strengthen existing chapters and develop new ones. The vision is to have an effective chapter of NBPC to coordinate and advocate for strengthening African American congregations in ministry in every presbytery. It is developing a new leadership role in each chapter through Church Growth Advocates, which serves as a resource and is the communication and advocacy link between congregational leaders, the NBPC chapter leadership, and the BCE office. The goal is to help every congregation develop a vision and a plan for growth in its context.

New Church Development and Bible Study Fellowships

In 1988 New Life Presbyterian Church in College Park, Georgia, became the first African American new church development (NCD) project funded by the General Assembly's Mission Development Resources Committee (MDRC) in twenty years. Since the 1950s most new African American churches were the result of white flight that occurred when African Americans joined white congregations. These churches became known as "transitional churches" in changing neighborhoods. In most

transitional scenarios, a small group of African American members inherited the building, name, image, worship style, and attitude toward the community. The churches typically did not attract people from the community experiencing change. Members struggled with maintaining huge buildings, called "white elephants," with no money left for mission. In 1998 New Life's predecessor, Bethany Presbyterian, had all the characteristics of this scenario. Black leaders and staff worked with the presbytery and the fledgling group of Black members of Bethany to change its name and develop an African American worship style and ministry focus. It became New Life Presbyterian, and it grew in membership very rapidly. New Life became the hope of African American leaders for an empowered Presbyterian congregation. Since 1988 there have been about fifteen African American NCD projects funded by the MDRC. Of these, twelve have survived, and half of them have grown in ministry and membership.

Presbyteries are responsible for starting new churches. The BCE office has collaborated with presbytery leaders in the development of most of the NCD projects. The office provided an Africentric leader development training experience for pastors and potential pastors of NCD ministry in 1997. The program prepared two new pastors who are now in NCD ministries. The office worked in partnership with the Urban Ministry office and the Evangelism office to sponsor a consultation with African American NCD ministries serving low-income urban communities. The six participating congregations shared powerful stories about the impact of their ministries on their communities.

The BCE office has provided small grants to a few congregations and their presbyteries that were interested in developing Bible study fellowships as outreach initiatives in new communities. About half of them have survived. Two are now NCDs, and one is a worshipping satellite ministry of a growing congregation. The NCDs that did not survive

lacked adequate pastoral and lay leadership, appropriate meeting space in the community, and/or leaders who were equipped to develop ministry in a community context outside of the church.

African American Resource Development

The BCE office continually identifies relevant African American resources for ministry and shares them in training events. It has produced several resources providing models of ministry for church growth in the African American community. Three resources—*Black Congregational Focus I, II, and III*—have provided models of relevant ministries for church growth in congregations. The latest resource, *Living the Vision: Health, Vitality, and Growth in African American Congregations*, was published in 2001.

The office also identifies and promotes other African American resources for ministry. Two such resources are by African American Presbyterian leaders: *Evangelism Is . . .* by Clinton Marsh (Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 1998) and *African American Christian Worship* by Melva Costen (Abingdon Press, 1993). As congregations continue to grow, there will be a greater need for Africentric resources to support leaders in their ministries.

Accomplishments, Obstacles, and Future Directions

The Office of Black Congregational Enhancement has demonstrated success in the following ways:

- Providing primary leadership with the other congregational enhancement offices for creating the impetus for church growth within the PC(USA).
- Contributing to the growth of racial ethnic membership from 4.7 percent in 1996 to approximately 9 percent by the end of 2002.
- Enabling African American Presbyterians to participate in the mission of the PC(USA)

through service on committees and task forces and providing leadership in all areas of the denomination's ministry. Many of the current African American staff members became visible in the larger church through the BCE office. In addition, the office makes visible the culture, gifts, and contributions of African American Presbyterians through regular articles for *The Racial Ethnic Torch* and other printed resources.

- Revitalizing NBPC through the African American Advisory Committee and helping to focus its mission on church growth.
- Developing a new core group of African American leaders with passion, vision, and experience in Africentric church growth and community ministries. They are providing leadership across the church.
- Providing consultations and training events on Africentric church growth and community ministries for pastors and lay leaders who were *ready* to grow. The climate in growing churches includes worship experiences and ministries that reflect a flavor of the Black religious experience. This is essential for evangelism strategies in the Black community.
- Increasing the number of growing African American congregations and African American members. The office has had an impact on only a small number of African American congregations because the major emphasis has been on growth in spirituality, ministry, and membership. Although only a small number of congregations were ready for this challenge, the good news is that this number is increasing.
- Providing leadership development strategies in Africa and Brazil. These experiences had a great impact on grounding leaders in a sense of Black identity and concern about Africa, and have influenced the larger church. Some of these leaders have designed African experiences for their congregations. NBPC has developed a partnership with the Worldwide Ministries Division, and it

supports the division's efforts to recruit African American missionaries and its AIDS ministries with African leaders.

- Working in partnership with NBPC to develop relationship and a common mission between African American and African new immigrant leaders.
- Promoting knowledge and pride about African heritage and Black identity. The office has increased leaders' awareness of the richness of the Black Presbyterian heritage and church development. This is reflected by the increased use of African clothes, cultural symbols, and intentional strategies to lift up Black Presbyterian leaders in conferences and training events.
- Providing leadership to the denomination in African American new church development and redevelopment ministries. While the number of NCD ministries is small, they are increasingly successful in becoming healthy, vital, and self-supporting communities of faith. Congregational transformational (redevelopment) ministries are more effective.
- Establishing a good working relationship with Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, the NBPC, ecumenical partners, presbyteries and synods, and General Assembly entities.

Obstacles and Challenges

- Professional leadership for African American congregations is in a state of crisis. More than one-third of African American congregations do not have installed pastors. This presents a challenge for every aspect of church growth.
- Financial support is needed for upgrading buildings to make them more attractive for evangelism in the community. The major source of funds for capital improvement at the General Assembly is the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program. This presents a problem for struggling small congregations.
- The office must develop partnerships with more presbyteries to strengthen the ministry

of African American congregations. This is a challenge because most presbyteries do not have staff positions with responsibility for African American church growth, and finding the right person with whom to work to develop a partnership can be difficult.

- While there has been some growth, most African American congregations are isolated from both the presbytery and the Black community and have no hope of growing. A major challenge for church growth is the isolation or alienation of congregational leaders in small churches from nurturing leadership that helps them to believe that they can change.
- There is insufficient funding for staff positions in the Racial Ethnic program area to work in developing resources for ministry and public relations.
- Advocating for and supporting African American leaders in church growth requires a great deal of hands-on ministry in the field with leaders, time out of the office, and adequate staff support in the office. There is a continuing challenge to meet the institutional deadlines and standards on an increasing amount of paperwork and to provide a ministry of presence for church growth.

Future Directions

In 2000 the BCE office and NBPC began to work on strategies to train leaders in local chapters to take on the mission of coordinating support and advocacy for African American church growth within their presbyteries. The goal is to develop NBPC leaders who can take more responsibility for African American church growth. This leadership task requires understanding the dynamics of Africentric growth, where to find resources within the connectional system, and how to develop an effective partnership with all sectors of the connectional Presbyterian system for supporting African American ministry, with a special focus on relationships with presbyteries. All of this is necessary to

continue to expand the base of congregations growing in spirituality, ministry, and membership. The office must work to develop a more effective strategy for communicating goals and program activities with all sectors of the church and continue to strengthen the relationship and mission between African American and African immigrant leaders.

The Office of African American Leader Development

Stephany D. Graham



The Office of African American Leader Development in the Christian Education Leader Development program area of the Congregational Ministries Division celebrated its five-year anniversary in

2003. In 1998, the office was established to provide leadership for congregations where African Americans are the majority or a sizable minority. The primary objective of the office is to infuse African American Christian education expressions in denominational resources and leadership programs. The office was formed in response to Commissioners' Resolution 95-30, which was approved at the 207th General Assembly in 1995.

A task force was appointed, and a final report was presented during the 209th General Assembly in 1997. The results of their research were published in a booklet titled, "The Nature and Task of Christian Education from an African American Presbyterian Perspective," by Dr. Gayraud S. Wilmore. The report recommended that the General Assembly publish and circulate Wilmore's booklet and urged "the Congregational Ministries Division to identify

and secure an African American Christian education staff person at the denominational level (the position is seen as an integral key to strengthening all Christian education programs). This resource person would specifically address African American educational concerns, including the development of networks and highlighting of success stories. The staff person would facilitate development of curricula that reflect the African American experience." The task force report also recommended the following:

1. Request that Congregational Ministries Division include in all its leadership programs and in the development of Christian education resources the African and African American presence in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
2. Urge the Congregational Ministries Division to increase the Black presence in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s resource materials. This would include, but would not be limited to, pictures, posters, and stories that reflect the Black experience; utilization of work by African American authors and illustrators; and positive portrayals of African American families and children.
3. Advocate that African American theologians and professional educators identified by the National Black Presbyterian Caucus and the Black Advisory Committee be included during periodic consultations with the Congregational Ministries Division.
4. Advise the Congregational Ministries Division as it develops curriculum and other educational resources and appoint a consulting committee and the National Black Presbyterian Caucus to monitor, advocate, and seek inclusion of the African American experience.
5. Encourage synods and presbyteries to identify the persons and the funding necessary to enable participation in seminars that increase knowledge and

awareness of African American church education, needs, and resources.

6. Direct the Congregational Ministries Division to highlight African American education in the Year of Higher Education.

The Rev. Stephany D. Graham was called to staff the position of associate for African American Leadership Training and Resource Development in March 1998. The title of the position was changed to Associate for African American Leader Development in 2001. During the past five years, the following networks have been formed to address the special interests and needs of young adults, music and worship leaders, and educators.

The National African Heritage Young Adult Caucus

The National African Heritage Young Adult Caucus (NAHYAC) exists to provide a network for persons of African heritage who are between the ages of 18 and 40. The mission of NAHYAC is to encourage the participation and the personal and spiritual development of young adults in the Presbyterian Church; to enlighten African descendents of their rich cultural and Presbyterian heritage; to promote harmony between generations; to provide a support base of resources and information for young adult leader development; and to advocate for social justice. The young adult caucus has become very active in recruiting new young adult leaders into leadership roles within the denomination.

The African Heritage Presbyterian Association of Musicians

The African Heritage Presbyterian Association of Musicians (AHPAM) is committed to work toward the enhancement, revitalization, and preservation of Christ-centered worship within our congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Because music is integral to the expression of faith and life for persons of African descent, AHPAM is committed to providing culturally relevant training,

information, resources, and support for persons involved in the music ministries of Black Presbyterian congregations. AHPAM is a national chapter of the Presbyterian Association of Musicians (PAM).

The African Heritage Biblical Studies Network

The African Heritage Biblical Studies Network has been designed to assist congregations interested in studying the Bible from an African-centered perspective. The Office of African American Leader Development provides grants for leadership, lay and professional training retreats, and resources to help congregations design courses for persons of all ages.

The Christian Education Urban Institute

The Christian Education Urban Institute strives to provide networking opportunities and training for volunteer and professional educators in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The institute was developed in 1998 in an effort to provide specialized training for African American educators in urban areas.

Internship Program

In 2003, a partnership was formed with the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary to provide training for an African American student who has completed her or his first year of studies. During the summer, students have the opportunity to learn leader development skills, attend national conferences, and work within a local African American congregation. Partnerships will be formed with additional seminaries in the future.

The Office of African American Leader Development assists presbyteries and congregations with:

- Lay leader development
- Christian education models
- Celebrations of history and heritage
- Annual conferences and training events
- Workshops and retreats
- African American resource development

African American Resources

Arlene Gordon



It seems like only yesterday that Black Americans attended predominantly Black schools where all of the textbooks were written by white authors. There was little, if any, exposure to resources written by Black authors. Any

mention of Black people was made in a negative manner through demeaning cartoons, Uncle Tom characters, and other negative portrayals. There was little or no opportunity for Black people to share their skills in literature through publications. As time passed, the institution of slavery ended. Many Blacks who had been taught to read by their owners proceeded to become educated. Many taught others to read and write. Over the years, Black people who were once forbidden to speak their minds or to read or write were able to freely express themselves through written literature. Though African Americans have long been in an informational vacuum, it is now a reality that those once forbidden even to be seen with a book are now authors and publishers.

American Presbyterians traditionally have placed a high priority on education. Presbyterians were among the leaders in the nation's higher education in the nineteenth century. One might assume, therefore, that the Presbyterian Church would lead the way in the publication of resources that help everyone reflect on and speak about God as it relates to their personal life experience. Nonetheless, the lure of the popular market has limited the number of publications for African Americans and other ethnic groups since they make up such a small percentage of the wider church. It has been an ongoing

struggle in the Presbyterian Church, as well as other mainline denominations, to convince publishers that resources reflecting the Black presence and the Black theological perspective are bona fide and pivotal to the African American faith experience.

The National Ministries Division has an ongoing responsibility to Black Congregational Enhancement. James Reese, Ms. Mildred Brown, and Rita Dixon were involved for many years in producing and promoting African American resources in the denomination. At the 1995 meeting of the General Assembly, an overture was passed to direct the Christian Education program area of the Congregational Ministries Division to create a position with the responsibility of developing African American Christian education resources and leadership.

The overture resulted in the establishment of a position for African American Leadership and Resource Development in the Christian Education program area in the Congregational Ministries Division. The position was filled by the Rev. Stephany Graham. Prior to the Rev. Graham's appointment, the Curriculum Publishing Program Area published two books: *Black and Presbyterian: The Heritage and Hope*, a 1998 revision of Gayraud S. Wilmore's 1983 book, and *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore*, edited by Eugene Turner. The Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, which had published Dr. Wilmore's earlier book, has recently published several other books by Black authors including: 1. *Evangelism Is* by Clinton Marsh (1997), 2. *The Heart of Black Preaching* by Cleophus J. LaRue (1999), and 3. *More than Chains and Toil* by Joan M. Martin (2000). Many of the General Assembly program areas have also published articles by African American authors. The *Horizons Magazine Bible Study* in 1990-1991 was written by Dr. Clarice J. Martin. *Church & Society* has featured several articles by African Americans over the years. The writers include Otis Turner, Arlene Gordon, Patricia Brown, Elenora Giddings Ivory, and Bernardine McRipley, among others. Many of

the program areas have also produced publications by Patricia Gill Turner, Eugene Turner, Julian Shipp, Rita Dixon, Fred Walls, Cynthia White, and others.

Some African Americans consider it a triumph finally to have a person at the national level to assist them and to produce resources by and about Black people. There are, however, some Blacks who are neither interested in the position nor a Black curriculum. The lack of interest, the small percentage of Black membership in the denomination, and a poor marketing strategy have combined to produce only minimal sales for those resources that have been produced. While the denomination is finally beginning to support the production of Black resources, their survival in a predominantly white denomination is tied to support from the Black constituency or to other persons who desire to learn more about the Black experience.

Resources are now more readily available than ever, and new ones are being published. Among them are many choices of resources written by Black authors. African American congregations now can choose resources, including curriculum, that meet their specific needs and circumstances? Where can you find them?

You may want to begin your search for resources at your presbytery resource center. There is a center in almost every presbytery. These centers are lending libraries and cover a wide range of topics. A staff person is usually available to assist you. You should help your resource center director to choose some specific resources that you would like to see included in the resource center inventory. The centers are designed to assist all congregations in locating the resources they need. While they are not intended to be archives, they are designed to introduce you to the latest resources available. For this reason, it may be to your congregation's advantage to build your own library.

A whole new world has been opened to African Americans through books and

resources written by African American authors. The following are a few of the recent resources produced by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and other denominational publishers.

Books

African American Christian Worship by Melva Wilson Costen. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.) A renowned professor of music and worship documents how African religious traditions, replanted in slavery and reshaped by the Christian gospel, can bear fruit in authentic and empowered worship.

African Americans in Mission by Morrisine Flenbaugh Mutshi and Stephen Bartlett. (Office of Global Awareness. Louisville, KY: Worldwide Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.], 2000).

African American Presbyterians have been involved in missionary service since 1833. Since 1928 more than sixty-seven African Americans have been appointed to long-term and short-term international missionary service. This book celebrates the ministry of African Americans who have served as missionaries of the Presbyterian Church.

Black and Presbyterian: The Heritage and the Hope by Gayraud S. Wilmore (Louisville, KY: Witherspoon Press, 1998). This revised edition of the classic text *Black and Presbyterian* is a "must read." Dr. Wilmore takes a hard look at the questions and concerns of the African American Presbyterian community at the dawn of the twenty-first century. He examines what it means to be African American and Presbyterian and raises the question of whether it is possible for the African American Presbyterian community to fully reclaim its cultural, historical, and spiritual heritage while remaining in the denomination.

Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore, edited by Dr. Eugene G. Turner. (Witherspoon Press, Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.], Louisville, KY, 1999). An inspiring collection of essays honoring the life and legacy of Gayraud Wilmore, the influential professor, mentor,

civil rights leader, and author. The essays are written by Bishop Desmond Tutu, Catherine Gunsalas Gonzalez, James Cone, and others. The struggle of African Americans in the pursuit of social justice in the church and in society is addressed. The book includes discussion questions, short biographies of the contributors, and an extensive bibliography.

Evangelism Is . . . by Clinton Marsh. (Geneva Press, Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, Louisville, KY, 1997). Dr. Marsh confronts head-on the declining membership of the mainline Protestant churches with this biblical and practical book on growing the church into the twenty-first century.

Preaching from the Pew by Patricia G. Brown. (Geneva Press, Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, Louisville, KY, 1998). Patricia Brown, Moderator of the 209th General Assembly, takes the reader on a personal journey into and out of some of the most critical challenges facing the church and Presbyterians in these turbulent and confusing times.

The Heart of Black Preaching by Cleophus LaRue. (Louisville, KY, Westminster John Knox Press, 1999). Dr. LaRue argues that the extraordinary character of Black preaching derives from a distinctive biblical hermeneutics that view God in practical ways in the lives of African Americans. He examines the historical conditions and the situations that have led to this hermeneutic and analyzes the sermons of prominent preachers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Booklets

Faith Journey: Special Edition, edited by Vincent M. Patton and Stephany Graham. This booklet celebrates the tremendous achievements of African Americans throughout U.S. history. It provides youth leaders with special times in the life of the African American church for study in September (“Back to School: Everyone Has A Talent”), December (“Kwanzaa: A Time for Giving”), February

(“Black History Month: Celebrating Those Who Accepted God's Call”), Easter (“Lent: Preparation and Encouragement for A New Life”), and June (“Juneteenth: Freedom Revisited”). The activities in each session have been designed around these special days. Background information is also included so leaders can explain the significance of each day to youth groups. PDS #095641 \$8.95. (Bridge Resources, Louisville, KY, 2000).

The Nature and Task of Christian Education from an African American Presbyterian Perspective by Stephany Graham. This paper by Gayraud S. Wilmore is a compilation of the task force report submitted to the 209th General Assembly. (Witherspoon Press, Louisville, KY, 1998).

Steal Away. This collection of prayers and affirmations for lay leaders guides readers through a seven-step process toward spiritual renewal. It provides an opportunity for readers to record their faith journeys as they grow. This resource can be used during personal or corporate retreats. PDS #095640 \$7.95.

African American Presbyterian Clergywomen celebrates a quarter of a century of the revolution that began when the first African American woman was ordained as Minister of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The book, which was produced in partnership with the African American Women's Caucus, honors those African American women who courageously give themselves in ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Videos

African American Leadership Development Training. African American Leadership Development Office, PC(USA), 1999.

**The Changing Face of the African American Church: Ministry to Young Adults*. African American Leadership Development Office, PC(USA), 2004. Many churches are struggling with the issue of how to reach young adults and develop church ministries

that will appeal to them. Other options have been explored, such as workshops and training. This video will help provide church leaders with the tools needed to begin a young adult ministry in their church and to understand the unique interests and needs of the young adults who are “missing in action” in the life of the church. Available in June 2004. VHS or DVD: \$19.99.

Bibles and Hymnals for African Americans from Other Publishers

Bibles

The African American Jubilee Edition of the Holy Bible, American Bible Society, 1995.

The Original African Heritage Study Bible, King James Version, World Bible Publishers, Inc., 1993.

Women of Color Study Bible, Nia Publishing Co., 2000.

Hymnals

Lift Every Voice & Sing II: An African American Hymnal (New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 1993). (Episcopal Church).

This Far by Faith. An African American Resource for Worship. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999). (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

Songs of Zion. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981). (United Methodist Church).

Note: Dr. Melva Costen chaired the committee that developed the *Presbyterian Hymnal*, which was published by Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1990, (Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.]).

Black Women, Living Witnesses



“ . . . so great a cloud of witnesses . . . ” —Hebrews 12:1

Periscope 3 lifted up the breakthroughs and challenges of African American clergywomen. This issue highlights the breakthroughs of African American women laity. The group that we have selected is, we hope, truly representative of women who have made significant breakthroughs. As we enter the twenty-first century, the challenge before us is to find additional ways to lift up the legacy of Black Presbyterian women.

— Bettie Durrah

Patricia G. Brown



Patricia G. Brown is a fifth-generation Presbyterian who fell in love with the General Assembly in Atlanta in 1983 when two denominations became one and she was a commissioner who had

an opportunity to speak on the floor. An elder at the Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church, Pat Brown is the only African American female to have served as moderator of Cincinnati Presbytery. She is the only person of color to have been hired as the Executive Coordinator of Local Arrangements for any General Assembly, and despite the odds, was elected Moderator of the 1997 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in a first-ballot landslide.

The themes of opportunity and empowerment were significant to Pat's tenure in office. She made a special point of accepting invitations to visit communities and congregations that have felt marginalized in the life of the national church. She began with Talmarks, an annual retreat of the Nez Perce tribe, and went on to include the entire island of Puerto Rico, the Navajo nation, the First Armenian Church in Fresno, and several Korean congregations, youth conferences, African American congregations, and rural congregations. Special events celebrating education and multiculturalism were held from Texas to New Jersey, and they were all good.

Her visits to Presbyterians in forty states and four countries were infused with the notion of possibility. When she encouraged people to become a part of the decision-making process, she could point to her own experiences as Exhibit A. Her reward in the years that follow has been to see many of those she encouraged taking their turns at the microphone or picking up the gavels of presbyteries, synods, national committees, and the General Assembly Council.

With an undergraduate degree from Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina, and a master's degree in social work from the University of Maryland, Pat Brown has been a caseworker, therapist, program director, puppeteer, storyteller, and meeting planner. Now she has moved into another facet of taking responsibility as a Presbyterian. She completed the three-year lay pastor program in Cincinnati just in time to serve the Kennedy Heights Presbyterian Church as Elder in Temporary Supply (2002–2003).

When she is not working and volunteering, Pat is either doing crafts or writing. Her book, *Preaching from the Pew*, was published by the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation in the spring of 1998. Her short stories for children have appeared in an anthology from *Highlights for Children* and the *Celebrate* curriculum from the PC(USA).

Eva McPherson Clayton



Eva McPherson Clayton, the first woman elected to Congress from North Carolina, took her seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1993. A native of Savannah, Georgia, she made her home in eastern North

Carolina where her husband, Theaoseus, is an attorney. Both she and her husband studied at Johnson C. Smith University, where she earned a bachelor of science degree in 1955. Subsequently she earned a Master of Science degree from North Carolina Central University and attended law school.

Before being elected to Congress, Eva Clayton was a member of the Warren County Board of Commissioners, and she served as chairperson from 1982 to 1990. During her tenure, she was named "Outstanding North Carolina Commissioner" by her peers. This early recognition seemed to foreshadow her election to the U.S. Congress. Even before

taking the oath of office, she was elected president of the Democratic Freshman Class, and she was named "Most Influential Newcomer" to the 103rd Congress by congressional staff members.

Congresswoman Clayton served her constituents well, and they elected her five times to represent their district in the House. She received numerous awards for legislation that she authored and supported in the areas of agriculture and rural economic development. Among them were awards from the Housing Assistance Council and the Food Research Action Committee. She consistently introduced and shaped legislation that benefited the predominantly rural 1st Congressional District in North Carolina that she represented. For three years she co-chaired the Congressional Rural Caucus, an organization with a bipartisan membership of approximately 140 people. She was also a strong advocate for education, vocational training, economic development, affordable housing, rural health, and minimum wages. She was involved in the campaign to prevent teenage pregnancy and opposed unilateral U.S. action in Iraq.

After ten years in Congress, Ms. Clayton has announced that she will not run for re-election. She has been appointed to a position with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization as Assistant Director-General/Special Advisor to the Director-General on World Food Summit Follow-up.

Ms. Clayton is an active member and an elder of the Cotton Memorial Presbyterian Church in the Presbytery of New Hope. She has also been active at the national level of the denomination. She has served on the Committee on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, the Self-Development of People Committee, and as a delegate to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches meeting in Hungary in 1987.

In 2003 the Women's Ministries Program honored Eva Clayton by giving her its 2003 Woman of Faith Award. The award was

presented at the Women of Faith Breakfast held during the meeting of the 215th General Assembly in Denver, Colorado.

Eva McPherson Clayton and Theaoseus Clayton have been married for forty years and have four children and five grandchildren.

Sara Brown Cordery



"Stir up what you got" has been the byword for Sara Brown Cordery as she has made her mark in educational and religious circles. This byword also became the title of her book, a collection of poems and sayings

published by Presbyterian Women in 1994, as Dr. Cordery ended her term as moderator of the Churchwide Coordinating Team for Presbyterian Women. She was the first African American woman to be elected to head the national body of more than three hundred thousand members from 1991 through 1994. Using the metaphor of a turtle on a stump, Sara recognized that many "constellations of partners" have helped her get where she is; therefore, she devoted the proceeds from the sale of her book, *Stir Up What You Got*, to the Leadership Development Fund of Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Her gift will live on in perpetuity as new leaders emerge.

An elder in Grace Presbyterian Church, Baltimore, Maryland, Dr. Cordery has served in many other leadership roles at all governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). She has served as moderator of Presbyterian Women (PW) at the presbytery and also as the first African American woman moderator of the Presbytery of Baltimore. Her "firsts" also include being the first woman to serve as chair of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People; she served on the committee for six years. She also served as a PW Enabler.

A native of Chester, South Carolina, Dr. Cordery served for thirty years in various academic and administrative positions at Barber-Scotia College, from which she graduated when it was still a junior college. After receiving a baccalaureate degree from South Carolina State College, she received a master of arts and a doctor of education degree from Teachers College at Columbia University, New York. Her other academic achievements include that of professor at Morgan State University, including as acting dean of the School of Business and Management.

A widow, Dr. Cordery lived with her sister for a number of years in a retirement community while she continued “stirring up her gifts,” including serving as first vice-president of Church Women United of Greater Baltimore. She is frequently called upon to share her wisdom and to lead workshops with Presbyterian Women in the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, National Black Presbyterian Women, and other groups.

Sara Brown Cordery has received many awards and honors. She has received a distinguished alumnus award from Barber-Scotia College, and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education named her an outstanding alumnus of all Black colleges in 1987. This distinguished educator appeared on national television in 1991 during the Lou Rawls telethon to help raise funds for the United Negro College Fund. The Churchwide Coordinating Team of Presbyterian Women honored her at its 1997 Gathering before five thousand people in Louisville, Kentucky.

Much of Sara’s influence has been with college students whom she has taught over the years. That influence continues on those students whose lives she touched. In much the same way she has influenced many leaders across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with her quiet grace, wisdom, competence, and dedication. Dr. Cordery’s largesse in terms of sharing of herself is very evident. Her late spouse, A. Theodore Cordery, was her partner

in ministry for thirty-six years. We salute Sara Brown Cordery as a “Living Witness” in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Willie Dell

“To be Black, female and sane in this society is an achievement. I am an achiever not because I have a degree and not because I have served on city council. I think it’s because I’ve been able to feel good about who I am, where I am and be able to share that story and tell it.”

—Willie Dell



When you meet Willie Dell, you know immediately that she feels good about who and whose she is, and that she has a story to share. That story is shared with passion and commitment whether in religious, political, community, or religious circles.

Although she represented the third district of Richmond, Virginia, on the city council from 1973 to 1982, the seeds for Willie Dell’s political life began a few years earlier when she started championing welfare rights with university students whom she was teaching. A native of North Carolina, she will tell you that she didn’t know what was expected of a “Virginian politician”—one representing the Commonwealth of Virginia who could also trace her history back to Patrick Henry. She was thus a maverick in the way she responded to many issues, including the need to claim office space for her council needs. After she moved into city council chambers with her card table in order to be readily accessible to the people, council members were given office space and clerical assistance. Of course, much of her work on the city council was people-centered. “I am a Christian advocate,

raising questions for the old, young, and less fortunate," she said.

A global citizen, Mrs. Dell could be found championing the causes of people in Africa, Haiti, and other parts of the world. Representing her church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the National League of Cities and other groups, Willie Dell met with Fidel Castro in Cuba, talked with Russian officials about infrastructure, met with church leaders about combating racism in Zimbabwe, talked about peace in Kenya, and participated in mission projects in many other parts of the world. On frequent trips to Haiti, she has provided resources to children struggling for everyday existence. Willie Dell recognized that the global is also local as she served from 1973 to 1993 as executive director of Richmond Community Senior Center, Inc. The local newspaper described her work with the Center thus: "Dell moves heaven, earth to get help for the needy." Her spouse, the Rev. Nathan Dell, former pastor of Woodville Presbyterian Church, described her as "a servant of people and God." She catalyzed a lot of student action when she taught sociology and social work courses at the University of Richmond and Virginia Commonwealth University. A social worker by training, Willie Dell has lived out her training through practical experiences that have taken her literally around the world and around the corner of her neighborhood.

Willie Dell has served in many capacities on various governing body levels of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). She also has served as president of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus. She has been a lecturer, keynote speaker, and workshop leader for civic, religious, educational, and political groups, and is known as a mover and a shaker, a prophetic witness, a risk taker, and an inspiration to all who hear her story.

Many groups have honored Willie Dell for her passionate commitment to justice, including her alma mater, St. Augustine's College, and the YWCA. She has been honored

as Citizen of the Year and given the Award of Excellence for Political and Civic Achievement, among others.

Willie Dell honors the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by serving as a living witness to all she touches with her life story and her passion.

Evelyn C. Gordon



Evelyn C. Gordon has spent much of her life working as a partner in ministry with her spouse, the Rev. Frank Gordon, and as a volunteer in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on all governing body levels.

Volunteerism has been her vocation and avocation. The Presbyterian Church has been greatly enriched by having her voice, interest, availability, and competence in serving in many arenas of the church—especially as she has called the church to reaffirm its commitment to persons of color.

She served as a member of the National Executive Committee of former United Presbyterian Women (1961-1964) and as moderator of Presbyterian Women at the presbytery and synod levels prior to reunion. Evelyn attended the first meeting of the predecessor body of Presbyterian Women, every Purdue meeting/gathering, and the more recent Churchwide Gathering in Louisville, Kentucky.

Prior to reunion, Evelyn served at the General Assembly level in the Vocation Agency, Board of Pensions, and the General Assembly Mission Council. She helped to give birth to the reunited church. At the point of reunion, Evelyn began serving in several very important entities including the Council on Church and Race, and subsequently she became moderator of the Racial Ethnic Ministry Unit in the years 1986-1991. During this time she helped to increase awareness and support of the

church's commitment to racial diversity as Blacks became part of a new church. When she lived in the South, she served on a Task Force for Implications of Reunion. She became the first chair of the Division of Education and Leadership Development for the Synod of the South.

Evelyn C. Gordon was honored by the National Black Presbyterian Caucus in 1985 when she received the prestigious Edler G. Hawkins Award. In 1983, she received the Lucy Craft Laney Award from Black Presbyterian Women. She has served as president of the Northeast Region of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus, as president of the Philadelphia chapter, and on the National Steering Committee. Evelyn Gordon was instrumental in the development of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus' structure and programs.

In her various leadership positions, she has attended many General Assemblies, and she has been appointed to serve on many task forces and search committees, and to participate in the planning and development of many programs. Evelyn C. Gordon has kept before the church the issues of diversity, mission, and the empowerment of its leaders, and her voice has been heard. This Living Witness continues to speak out wherever she is serving.

Mary Grace Rogers

“ . . . You've been our wise African sister, mother, guide, our insightful teacher, and stimulating scholar.”

A colleague penned these lines in 1996 when Mary Grace Rogers retired as assistant professor of sociology at Florida Memorial College in Miami. Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) family could also pen similar lines. Mary Grace has been our sage woman, our race woman, our scholar, our insightful teacher, our political analyst, our mentor, and our partner in ministry.

Born in Shreveport, Louisiana, during rigid segregation, Mary Grace Rogers was nurtured by a Black cultural and faith community that helped her develop characteristics of scholarship, advocacy, and protest. Receiving a Master of Arts degree in sociology from Yale University in 1947, this honors graduate of Dillard University has been sharing her sociological and political insights over the years with the church, school, and community. Her role models included Benjamin Mays, Howard Thurman, and Frank Wilson. Her mentors included Ruth Brett, historian Benjamin Quarles of Dillard University, and sociologist Ira D. Reid, graduate professor at Atlanta University. Her experiences helped to develop teaching and research expertise from which her students and others benefited throughout her career.

Mary Grace is married to the Rev. Jefferson P. Rogers, and she has shared with him ministry on the cutting edge across several denominations. Serving as co-founder of the Church of the Redeemer in Washington, D.C., is one example. In 1984, the couple began restoring the Howard Thurman Home in Daytona Beach, Florida, under the auspices of the New Birth Corporation. Restoration of the home was completed in 1987, and it was designated a National Historic Preservation Site in 1987. Mary serves as curator. In addition to such current programs as the Howard Thurman Center at Stetson University, there are plans for creating a Preparatory School and Research Center that can serve as an outlet for cultural institutions throughout the nation.

As a volunteer in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and in one of its predecessor denominations, Mary Grace Rogers served on the Program Agency Board and was a member of the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (at the time when divestment in South Africa was a serious issue). In addition, she served as co-chair of the Council on Church and Race and as a member of the Cross Caucus, the Third World Women's Coordinating Committee, and the

Standing Committee on Black Presbyterian Women. In these leadership positions, she had the opportunity to help create the agenda for the church's involvement in racial ethnic ministries and racial and global justice. Serving as coordinator of the Northeast region of the Black Presbyterian Caucus was a natural progression for her.

Mary Grace Rogers has also been actively engaged in other leadership positions, including the Washington chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Black Ecumenical Commission of Boston,

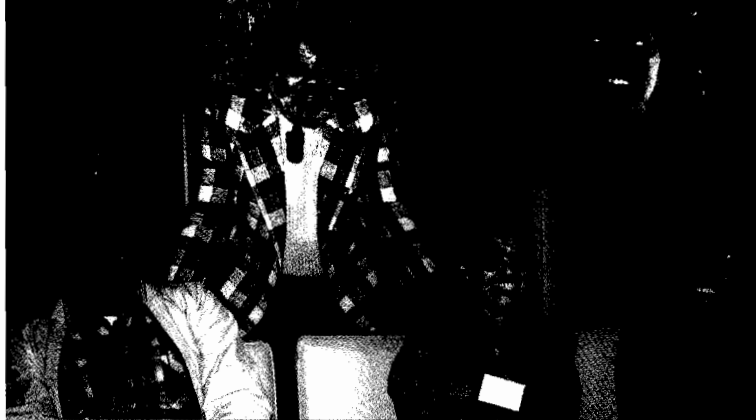
publisher of the *Black Church* periodical, of which she was the managing editor. She was a member of the Advisory Committee and the Mayor's Human Relations Council in Newton, Massachusetts. Mary Grace Rogers also remained engaged close to home as she gave leadership to presbytery activities.

This living witness continues to teach, inform, and challenge us with her keen insight and intellect.

These profiles were compiled by Bettie J. Durrab, Darius L. Swann, and Vince Patton.

African American Executives in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

2



**Who are our leaders?
Who are the unsung heroines
and heroes?
Who are the grassroots leaders?
Who will be our leaders in the next
few years?
Who will carry us into the next
decade?
... What is the wind behind your
back?
What force is driving you?
What catalyst pushes you forward?
God of history is on your side.
Your presence authenticates
mission.
You challenge the church; you
challenge unjust structures.
Repressive structures.
Strictures and weak bonds.
At times, you become the loyal
opposition.
You bear witness to the God of
justice.
You are a visible witness to a God
of love, justice, and mercy.**

*Excerpt from Breakthroughs and
Challenges, pp. 7-9*



Barbara Campbell Davis



Barbara Campbell Davis has served the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) faithfully for more than a quarter of a century in two executive positions. Since 1992 she has been executive presbyter/ stated clerk of

New Hope Presbytery in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. Prior to assuming that position she was the associate executive for Mission Funding and Interpretation in the Synod of the Sun, which covers Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Since her early years, Barbara has been involved in the life of the Presbyterian Church, and in 1973, before becoming a governing body executive, she was ordained an elder by Pine Crest Presbyterian Church in the Presbytery of Brazos (PCUS), now the Presbytery of New Covenant.

Upon finishing high school in Houston, Texas, she entered Texas Southern University and earned a Bachelor of Science degree. At Tuskegee Institute she earned a Master of Education in science education. Further study at Texas A & M University, Texas Southern University, the University of North Texas, and Perkins School of Theology prepared her for a successful and varied career. She taught science in the public schools in Texas and worked as a research chemist at Miles Laboratories in Elkhart, Indiana. Her education and experience in the secular world developed skills that have stood her in good stead as a church professional.

Appointed in 1976 as associate executive in the Synod of the Sun, Barbara created a funding system widely recognized as one of the best in the denomination. She helped to develop a new and broader emphasis on stewardship that highlighted mission interpretation.

During her employment with the Synod of the Sun, she was able to direct the thrust

of mission and ministry with racial ethnic people. She worked closely with the four ethnic councils as well as the Committee of Women of Color. Leadership development and sensitivity to needs of ethnic groups were special emphases in this involvement.

As presbytery executive in New Hope Presbytery, she has emphasized improved communication and efficiency within the presbytery, developed support groups for pastors and small churches, and fostered the development of manuals for the personnel and nominating committee, and a handbook for the Committee on Ministry.

Barbara has served on many boards and committees at all levels of the denominational governing bodies. She has also served important community organizations and has been actively engaged in ecumenical affairs. She has fulfilled such important assignments as delegate to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Hungary (1997); delegate to the World Council of Churches meeting (1975); vice chair and chair of the General Assembly Mission Board, PCUS (1983-85); PCUS delegate to the Consultation on Church Union (1977-86).

Warner Robert Durnell



The Rev. Warner Robert Durnell was called to the position of executive presbyter of the North Alabama Presbytery on July 15, 2003. He is the first African American to be called to such a position in the Synod

of Living Waters (composed of twelve presbyteries in the four-state region of Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama). He came to this position after serving St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church of Nashville for ten years.

Warner Durnell is a native of West Chester, Pennsylvania. He attended Lincoln University

(Pennsylvania) and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science. While at Lincoln University he was introduced to the United Presbyterian Church of North America through the Mary Dodd Chapel Services. The Rev. Dr. Samuel Stephens, who served as Dean of the Chapel, encouraged him to enroll at the Interdenominational Theological Center of Atlanta, Georgia, in preparation for the ordained ministry.

Warner matriculated for one year at the Interdenominational Theological Center prior to transferring to Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, where he graduated with a master of divinity degree with a concentration in biblical studies. While in seminary, he was an active member of the Westhills Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, where the Rev. John D. Sharp was senior minister. While a member at Westhills Church, he served on the session as the youngest elder that church had yet elected.

From Columbia, Warner assumed the pastorate of the Dellabrook Presbyterian Church (PCUS) of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and he worked part-time in campus ministry at Wake Forest University. After serving Dellabrook Church, he was called to the pastorate of the Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, adjacent to Stillman College. Stillman College invited him to serve as its college chaplain and instructor in the Religion and Philosophy Department. He was later called to serve as an associate synod executive for the Synod of Living Waters, with its office in Brentwood, Tennessee. From the staff of the synod, he returned to the pastorate, serving St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Nashville.

Warner has served the church on committees and commissions at the presbytery, synod, and General Assembly levels. He has served on the board of the National Black Presbyterians United, as well as on the National Committee of the Council of Church and Race and the National Committee of Self-Development of People. In 2002 he was a commissioner to the

215th General Assembly, which met in Columbus, Ohio. His most coveted achievement as an ordained Presbyterian minister was as the 1996 recipient of the Lawrence Bottoms Award.

Arlene W. Gordon



The Rev. Dr. Arlene Gordon was elected in 2003 as executive presbyter of the Presbytery of Tropical Florida. Before assuming that position, Arlene served as interim executive presbyter for

the Presbytery of Detroit. She also served as the associate for resource center development and educational ministry advocates in the Congregational Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Louisville, Kentucky. Before that, she served as associate pastor of Sojourner Truth Presbyterian Church in Richmond, California, and worked part-time for the Presbytery of San Francisco as resource center director.

Arlene has been involved in the church and the community for most of her life. She is very modest about her many achievements and prefers that any glory and honor be given to God. Before entering seminary, she had a distinguished career in federal government where she served as acting regional representative for the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Region IX, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in San Francisco. She has served as a budget analyst for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Washington, D.C., the Social and Rehabilitation Service in San Francisco, and as a Foreign Service officer for the United States Information Agency.

Arlene has led numerous workshops across the denomination and has been the keynote speaker for several national events, including as preacher at the Redevelopment Conference. She was the workshop leader for a synod

retreat on spirituality and the preacher for the Synod Gathering of Presbyterian Women in July 2003.

Arlene has been the dean for the Presbytery Youth Triennium on two separate occasions and has served on the design team for the Montreat Youth Conference. She has been a mentor for many youth and young adults and continues to provide support and encouragement to candidates for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

Arlene served on the Board of the National Training Center in Richmond, Virginia, an ecumenical organization that provides training to resource center directors, and works with the Union Theological Seminary and the Presbyterian School of Christian Education. She currently serves on the board of the H. Eugene Garlough Jr. Endowment Chair at San Francisco Theological Seminary.

Arlene is a graduate of San Francisco Theological Seminary, master of divinity, and United Theological Seminary, doctor of ministry. She is the mother of one son, Donny Edward Gordon. He and his wife, Sylvia, live in Fairfield, California, and have two children, Brittany and Brian.

Curtis A. Kearns, Jr.



The Rev. Curtis A. Kearns, Jr., a distinguished executive with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), serves as director of the National Ministries Division. He was raised as a child of the church. His grandfather was an elder

in the former Seventh Street Presbyterian Church (now the First United Presbyterian Church) of Charlotte, North Carolina, renowned for developing African American leadership for the church and the community. His father and mother were two of those leaders. The late Rev. C. Andre Kearns, Sr., was

a Presbyterian minister and his mother, Laura H. Kearns, is noted for her activities within the denomination, especially with Presbyterian Women. In his words, "Their influence and inspiration were integral to any success I have achieved in my ministerial career."

Kearns earned his A.B. degree cum laude from Johnson C. Smith University during the turbulent 1960s, a time when the civil rights movement was helping to redefine American society. Johnson C. Smith emphasized excellence and encouraged its students to prepare for leadership in the newly integrated society, and its students eagerly embraced the challenge. While at Smith, he spent his summers working on national mission projects for the Presbyterian Church. These experiences proved instrumental in his call to ministry and his career direction. After graduating from Smith, he enrolled at Princeton Theological Seminary, where he received the Master of Divinity degree. The Presbytery of Southern Virginia, located in the Synod of Catawba of the former United Presbyterian Church of North America, ordained him to his first call.

His initial years of ministry were spent in Washington, D.C. During this period he served a variety of churches in many different leadership roles. In addition, he was elected by the denomination to serve both as a representative to the Consultation on Church Union and as a member of the Support Agency Board. By the end of the 1970s, Kearns had accumulated a considerable array of leadership experiences to assist him in his church career. While residing in the Washington, D.C. area, he also served as a manager with the local telephone company, an experience that helped to develop his management skills.

In 1991, he was elected chair of the National Self-Development of People Committee, a responsibility that reacquainted him with national church activity. He served two years as chair of the committee. When the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reorganized its national structure in 1993, he was uniquely prepared to

assume an executive position with the General Assembly Council. In June 1994, the 206th General Assembly confirmed and then installed him as director of the National Ministries Division.

As director of National Ministries Division, the Rev. Curtis Kearns is responsible for implementing the General Assembly's wide-ranging mission program within the United States. This program includes the denomination's church development program; many health, education, and welfare activities; ministries among racial ethnic groups, national volunteers, institutions of higher learning, the Presbyterian Washington Office, and Churchwide Personnel Services. In 2002 Kearns was elected to a third four-year term in this prestigious position.

Curtis Kearns is married to Ann Richards Kearns, a Presbyterian elder and a Head Start administrator with the Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky. He has a son, Andre Kearns III, a daughter-in-law, Nadine D. Kearns, and a daughter, Chandra A. Kearns, who is also a Presbyterian elder.

Curtis Kearns' vision of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can be summarized by the following words excerpted from one of his addresses:

“Our nation has lost the vision of community, which strengthens and sustains. When we see ourselves alone and we act on the basis of personal interest, we are limited in what we can accomplish. But when we share proven values with a community of people committed to a like vision we are unstoppable, and that is what God's church is all about—sharing the vision that is Christ Jesus with our nation and the world.

“It is my hope that the National Ministries Division would be about helping to build a kind of community that would help the church teach

through its actions that there is strength in diversity, teach through its service that there is hope even amidst so much hopelessness, teach through its belief and exuberance that justice and righteousness are treasured gifts from God.”

Floyd N. Rhodes, Jr.



In July 2002 Floyd N. Rhodes, Jr., assumed the position of Interim Associate Director of the Higher Education Program Area of the National Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church

(U.S.A.). This program area relates to the seventy-three universities, schools, and colleges that were started or founded by Presbyterians. Grants, loans, and scholarships for students are administered through this program area, and campus ministries and student ministries in higher education are housed here as well.

Floyd Rhodes, a native of Tennessee, grew up in Memphis. He attended public school there and graduated from Manasses High School. He has two children: a son who is retired from a twenty-year career in the United States Air Force, and a daughter who works at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. His son and his wife have three sons and they reside in Spokane, Washington.

Floyd Rhodes received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Norfolk State University in Virginia, where he majored in psychology and minored in mathematics. After college he attended Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey, where he received a Master of Divinity degree with a concentration in Old Testament studies.

Floyd Rhodes has been an assistant pastor in Rochester, New York, and pastor of

congregations in Los Angeles; Princeton; Wilmington, Delaware; and Cleveland. He was program associate of Chicago Presbytery for the Black Program Advisory Unit, which consisted of the fourteen black or predominantly black congregations, and the two social service organizations/neighborhood houses that operated under the auspices of the presbytery.

From July 1990 to February 2000 he was the associate executive presbyter for Ethnic and Urban Concerns in the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, and he had primary responsibility for the twenty-three racial ethnic congregations (ten African American, twelve Asian, and one Hispanic). He was on the staff of the Division of the Urban Church, the Division of Church Growth and Ministry, and the Division of Mission and Social Concerns.

From March 1, 2000 to July 31, 2002, he was the interim executive stated clerk of the Synod of South Atlantic of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The synod's sixteen presbyteries are in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. The synod's office is in Jacksonville, Florida.

Floyd Rhodes was a member of the General Assembly Council (GAC) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for six years, completing his term of service in July 1995 at the conclusion of the 207th General Assembly. He was a commissioner to the Reuniting General Assembly in 1983 and the 211th General Assembly in 1999, held in Fort Worth, Texas, where he was appointed vice-moderator of the General Assembly.

During his tenure on the General Assembly Council, he served on three search committees, including the one for the directors of the three divisions of the GAC. He was a member of the Building Community Among Strangers Task Force, and, until he came to the synod, he was a member of the Urban Presbytery Network, a coalition of leaders from presbyteries that have large metropolitan areas within their boundaries. The network collaborates with the Urban Ministry Office of the National Ministries Division.

Floyd Rhodes was the vice president of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus from 1996 to 1999. As a member of the presbytery and synod staff, he was involved in the African American Middle Governing Body Staff Organization, which meets annually to discuss issues and strategy.

For nine years he was an adjunct professor at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. He taught Presbyterian Church history and polity to students at Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary.

Floyd Rhodes was a member of several significant organizations in the Greater Atlanta area and served on the board of Atlantans Building Leadership for Empowerment (A.B.L.E.). This is a religious-based community organization that seeks to empower impoverished people and communities. In addition, he served on the board of Genesis Shelter, which provides homeless families with newborn babies living quarters for up to six months (and longer, if needed) and counseling and support to enable them to gain a solid footing in their lives.

He serves on the Church Relations Council of Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina. Since 1999 he has been a member of the North Metro (Atlanta) Chapter of 100 Black Men. He is married to Dr. Emerelle McNair Rhodes, an educational consultant.

James A. Thomas, Sr.



Those who know James Thomas describe him as a hard-working, dedicated, kind, and compassionate person who has devoted his life, time, and energy to justice and equality for all of God's children. He has touched many with

his warm smile and genuine spirit. Some have even said that being in his presence reminds them of all that is good in the human spirit.

His response to such comments is, "To God be the glory because the gifts that I have and the ministry to which I have been called is not about me, but about God's amazing grace."

James Thomas received his early childhood education in the public schools of Richmond County, Georgia. He is a graduate of Lucy Craft Laney High School, named after the great educator and daughter of David Laney, a Presbyterian minister. Thomas received a Bachelor of Arts degree in history with a minor in religion and philosophy from Paine College in Augusta, Georgia. A master of divinity degree was conferred upon him by the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia. He earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, California. Over the years he has continued his education, receiving certificates at Kent State University, the University of Nebraska, Omaha Theological Seminary, the Interdenominational Theological Center, and St. Luke Hospital. He has studied church administration, urban ministry, and clinical pastoral education. Furthermore, he has received many awards and citations for his tireless efforts in civil rights, community improvement, and outreach to the poor and oppressed.

Through the years, James Thomas served as a senior pastor of three congregations: Christ Presbyterian Church in Augusta, Georgia, Calvin Memorial United Presbyterian Church in Omaha, Nebraska, and St. Mark's Presbyterian Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

In 1990, Dr. Thomas was called to serve on the executive staff of the newly formed Presbytery of Charlotte. He served as an associate executive for thirteen years. He was the first and, to date, the only African American to have served the Presbytery of Charlotte, the sixth largest in the denomination and the one with the largest number of African American members. He distinguished himself as a capable and effective leader in the position.

Dr. Thomas has served the presbytery, synod, and General Assembly in a variety of

other ways. He was dean of the Young Pastors Seminar for the Church Vocations Unit and a member of the Advisory Committee for the Black Congregational Enhancement Office. He has been a commissioner to the General Assembly in 1978 and 1993, and a member of the Synod Management Team and the Cabinet on Ethnic Church Affairs for the Synod of the Covenant, and he has served on the Synod Council of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. In addition, he has been vice moderator of that presbytery, chair of the Church Development Committee, president of Black Presbyterians United, and a member of the Committee on Ministerial Relations in the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley.

Dr. Thomas' service has extended beyond the church and into the community. He led efforts to desegregate the public schools of Douglas County in Nebraska, organized political rallies around economic justice dealing with fair housing and employment, and led efforts for criminal justice in the penal system, which eventually brought him before the Supreme Court. He has served on the board of directors of the following organizations: Katherine Tyler Neighborhood Center, Northeast Mental Health Association, American Sickle Cell Anemia Association, Uptown Shelter for Men, Crisis Assistance Ministry, Center for Urban Ministry, and Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary. He also has served as president of Partners in Ecumenism, as president of Mecklenburg Ministry, as president of Catawba Economic Development Association, and as a member of the Board of Visitors at Barber-Scotia College. At one time Dr. Thomas was the host of a Sunday morning television show titled, "Soul Searching," which addressed the role of the church and its impact on the life of the community.

In September 2003, Dr. Thomas accepted a call to serve the church as associate director of Evangelism and Church Development. In this challenging program area, he hopes to help lead the church in a period of growth and renewal.

Jim is the son of the late Edward and Myrtis Thomas. He grew up with three other siblings, two brothers and one sister. He is married to Linda P. Thomas and is the father of three children: Dwalla, Tommy, and Nia. He has one grandchild, Lynise.

Over the years James Thomas has balanced his ministry by taking time to engage in his passions for reading, fishing, walking, and woodworking.

Donnie Rufus Woods



Donnie Woods was born in 1954 in Louisville, Mississippi, and grew up on the family farm with eighteen other brothers and sisters. His parents, George and Opaline, provided a Christian home in which all of their children were

loved, nurtured, and encouraged to work very hard. Donnie attended the public schools of Winston County, Mississippi, and graduated from Noxapater High School in 1973. After accepting Jesus Christ as his personal savior and receiving the Sacrament of Baptism at an early age, he became active in the ministries of St. James Presbyterian Church. While active in the church and community, Donnie was employed by Georgia Pacific Corporation for three years. This was a time of seeking to understand God's call, claim, and purpose for his life. In 1978 he was taken under care of Mississippi Presbytery as a candidate for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. This was part of the effort of the Black Clergy Recruitment Committee of the former Synod of South Atlantic.

Donnie is a graduate of Mary Holmes College in West Point, Mississippi, Mississippi State University in Starkville, and Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary in Atlanta. He was ordained by Tropical Florida Presbytery in 1985. He completed internships at Radcliffe Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, Wilton

Presbyterian Church in Wilton, Connecticut, and the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, B.C. He also served as a temporary supply pastor for several small churches.

During the past seventeen years, Donnie has served pastorates in Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina. He served on the staff of Savannah Presbytery for five years as designated staff associate for Racial Ethnic Ministries. Donnie has been active at all levels of the denomination and in many community and outreach organizations that work for the betterment of all humanity. He also has been instrumental in developing new churches and lay schools and in church officer development.

For the past three and a half years, Donnie has served as designated associate executive and stated clerk of Charleston Atlantic Presbytery. He is a member of the Association of Stated Clerks, Synod Racial Ethnic Council, General Assembly Committee on Ordination and Examinations, and the Presbyteries of South Carolina Stewardship Team. Donnie has sought to make himself known to the churches of the Charleston Atlantic Presbytery by visiting, preaching, moderating meetings, and administering the sacraments. In addition, he has served as a board member of the Clanton-Covenant Partnership for Racial Harmony, a member of the Presbyterian Neighbors Outreach Program, an adviser for the Project Star Tutorial Program, vice moderator and moderator of the Committee on Ministry, and a member of the African American Pastors Fellowship in Charlotte, North Carolina.

He and his wife, TeResa, are the parents of three children. They all enjoy their work and play in Charleston.

These profiles were compiled by James Foster Reese and Rita Dixon.

Retired Staff Persons

Lillian Anthony



Lillian Anthony was born in Indianapolis, Indiana. She attended public schools in Indianapolis, where she graduated from Crispus Attucks High School. She worked and attended school alternately, and completed her

undergraduate degree at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, where she majored in elementary education.

Lillian joined Witherspoon United Presbyterian Church, taking an active part in the growth program of the church and becoming one of the stellar leaders of the youth movement. In 1951, she attended the National Youth Convention at Lake Geneva in Wisconsin. At that conference she made a commitment to dedicate her life to the service of the church. She enrolled in the Christian Education Department of Pittsburgh Xenia Seminary, where she earned a master's degree in religious education in 1953. She then joined the staff of the Witherspoon Church. In 1955 she considered entering the foreign service of the church and accepted a three-year appointment to Pressley Memorial Institute in Egypt. Beginning in 1960 she served five years as an area representative for the Presbyterian Women's Program. She later earned a doctorate from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

She worked in the area of civil and human rights. She became director of civil rights for

the City of Minneapolis and became the associate for affirmative action when the United Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in the United States merged and located to Louisville, Kentucky. In 1993 she was ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament in Louisville Presbytery, now Mid-Kentucky Presbytery, and she was installed as associate for affirmative action and equal employment opportunity in the Office of the General Assembly.

The following individuals participated in Lillian's ordination and installation service: the Rev. Jovelino Ramos, former associate director for Racial Ethnic Ministries; the Rev. James Foster Reese, the former director of the Racial Ethnic Ministry Unit; the Rev. Ronald A. Reinhardt, pastor of Central Presbyterian Church in Louisville; and the Rev. Joan Salmon Campbell, former pastor of St. Mark's Presbyterian Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

Lillian Anthony retired from the General Assembly staff in 1994.

Gladys Boykin



Gladys Boykin began her service with the Presbyterian Church in 1960 as a legal secretary for the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). She later served as a deputy to the general director of the Presbyterian Church of

East Africa in Nairobi, Kenya, where she

identified concerns and developed strategies to implement program objectives. She spent three years serving as the special assistant to interns before beginning a long ministry with Presbyterian Women as the associate for women's programs.

For fourteen years Gladys Boykin was an executive with Presbyterian Women with responsibility for managing all administrative, financial, and personnel functions of the 300,000-member organization. In addition, she was involved in efforts to raise \$6 million annually, made decisions regarding hundreds of proposals from groups and, in turn, disbursed millions of dollars of seed money to these projects. It was during this period that she became known for lectures on world issues such as hunger, peace, apartheid, women's rights, the aging, cultural diversity, and spirituality. During her tenure, she developed a newsletter for Presbyterian Women, was a frequent contributor to *Horizons* magazine, and served as a motivational speaker, panelist, and consultant. She led a group of twenty-five Presbyterian Women to South Africa, Namibia, and Swaziland, and traveled as a staff consultant to Presbyterian Women to Mexico and Central America. In 1993 she led thirty-two women to meet European churchwomen and men in Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania to listen to the challenges facing the church and society during the region's democratization. In 1995 she and the General Assembly Moderator Robert Bohl traveled to Malawi at the invitation of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. In 1996 she led a group of Presbyterian Women to Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines to learn about the status of children at risk of sexual exploitation.

She has received numerous honors and awards. In 1983, she received the prestigious Lucy Craft Laney Award. In 1996, she received the Louisville International Cultural Center Volunteer Award. From 1986 to 1987, she was among the Who's Who of American Women.

Gladys retired after thirty-seven years of service with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Currently, she is active at Central Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, where she is an elder and serves as a member of the Church Growth Committee. She is a former member of the Pastor Nominating Committee and the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry. She is a member of the President's Roundtable at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, the Worldwide Ministries Division's Committee on Discerning Your Call to Mission, and Church Women United.

Gladys is a member of the Board of Directors of the Louisville International Cultural Center, a member of Crane House, and a member of the Women's Council and the Board of Governors of the Jefferson Club. Gladys volunteers with the following associations: Sister Cities of Louisville, Benchmark 2000, Kentucky School for the Blind, American Association of Retired Persons, River City Business and Professional Women, United Nations Association, National Council of Negro Women, Focus Louisville Alumni Group, Metropolitan Louisville Women's Political Concerns, and Network, Inc.

Gladys describes her interests as walking, community and world affairs, human rights and justice issues, travel, reading, and golf. She says that her priorities are "to continue my faith journey, to nurture and be nurtured, to provide quality time for my personal life—spouse, daughter, grandson, and great-granddaughter."

Carroll Douglas Jenkins



Carroll Jenkins was born in Chicago, Illinois, on July 16, 1935, and at a young age his family returned to South Carolina, where he received his early education.

He matriculated at Johnson C. Smith University

in Charlotte, North Carolina, was inducted into the Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society, and graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1958.

His other academic achievements include studies at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, the University of Michigan School of Business Administration, the Middle Atlantic Training Conference, and the Main Event Program.

From 1958 to 1963, he was employed by the State of Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare as a social worker. During this period he volunteered as a youth counselor at the First African Presbyterian Church in West Philadelphia. In 1964 he became the director of that church's Christian Education program, which involved and motivated many young people. He remained in that position until 1966 when he completed his seminary work at the Temple University Conwell School of Theology and was ordained and installed as assistant pastor of First African Presbyterian Church.

In 1968 Carroll Jenkins became the pastor of the Fifth Presbyterian Church (now Thomas M. Thomas Presbyterian Church) in Chester, Pennsylvania. Through his participation in the outreach of that church in the civil rights movement in Chester, he became a leader in the struggle to organize the Black community. He remained in that position until 1971 when he was appointed the first African American associate executive for the Presbytery of Philadelphia. While serving in this position, he provided leadership for the mission program of the presbytery and participated in shaping a strategy for racial ethnic church development and redevelopment.

In June 1981 the Rev. Carroll Jenkins accepted the call to serve as the first African American executive for the Synod of the Piedmont. He continued in that position until the synod was merged with the Synod of North Carolina and the Synod of Virginia to form the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic. His assignment with the Synod of the Piedmont was to aid in the

building of a unified synod community from two synods that had never seemed to come together. A governing body that served all its members was an important objective that was realized under his leadership.

In October 1988, following Reunion, Carroll Jenkins was elected the first synod executive and stated clerk of the newly formed Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, and he continued in that capacity (and later as treasurer) until his retirement on September 30, 1998. Again the first African American elected to this position, he took on the task of building a cohesive and responsive organization that brought together Southern and Northern Presbyterians of diverse backgrounds into one synod.

Dr. Jenkins is currently serving as an interim pastor, and he continues to work at promoting social change and improving the quality of life for all of God's children through education, mentoring, organizing, and sharing the experience that God has provided.

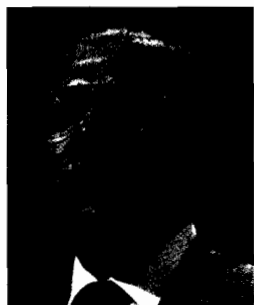
He has received numerous honors and awards, including the Edler G. Hawkins Award in 1983. King College in Bristol, Tennessee, awarded him a Doctor of Divinity degree in August 1991.

Dr. Carroll Jenkins is a product of the Presbyterian Church's educational evangelism effort. A fourth-generation Presbyterian, his great-grandfather was a Presbyterian minister who was educated at Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith University), his grandfather was an elder who was trained at Biddle University, and his mother was an organist and music director in Presbyterian churches in South Carolina.

He has been a minister, teacher, trainer, and mentor who has always been available to help when called upon. He is a visionary who is willing to think creatively in seeking the fulfillment of God's will and a church that responds to the needs of God's children.

The Rev. Dr. Carroll Jenkins is married to the former Nancy Hall. They have four children and four grandchildren.

Eugene G. Turner



Eugene G. Turner, destined to become a leader and statesman in his church and ecumenical circles, was born in Sandersville, Georgia, and grew up in the city of Macon in a family of six children.

He was educated in the public schools of Macon and, upon graduation from Ballard-Hudson High School, entered Knoxville College in Tennessee. In 1957 he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology and English literature. He spent the years 1957-1958 in the Army Corp of Engineers, Third Army Division. In 1959 Eugene Turner matriculated at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and he earned his Master of Divinity degree in 1962. He earned a Master of Arts degree in government organization and Christian ethics at Harvard University in 1970.

Upon completion of his theological studies in 1962, Turner was engaged in parish ministry, first as an assistant pastor at Ward Presbyterian Church in Paterson, New Jersey, and later, in Philadelphia, as one of the first pastors in a high-rise housing development in the nation. Thereafter in his career, Turner held a succession of administrative positions at presbytery, synod, and General Assembly levels, including assistant for staff development for the mission staff of the Presbytery of Philadelphia; coordinator of mission development for North Philadelphia and the Kensington area of Philadelphia (1964 to 1968); and director of the Office of Ethnic Church Affairs, Synod of the Golden Gate (1970 to 1972). Focusing on service to all racial ethnic people of the synod, the office developed new churches, resourced urban churches, and addressed social issues. Through this office the request for a grant to the Angela Davis Defense Fund was made and delivered,

which caused great upheaval in the church. He also served as area executive of the Golden Gate Mission Area, Synod of the Pacific (1972 to 1974). This office had a professional staff of eight and an administrative staff of six, serving a constituency of 176,000.

Following the 1973 reorganization of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, Dr. Turner was elected executive of the Synod of the Northeast, becoming the first African American to serve a synod with a predominantly white membership. The synod had a central staff of 28 and a total staff of 177, and operated on a budget of \$5 million (1975 to 1993).

In 1993 Eugene Turner was elected associated stated clerk of the General Assembly, and he served in that capacity until his retirement in 2001. In that position Dr. Turner steered the PC(USA) toward three significant accomplishments in ecumenical relations. The first was a covenant with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Reformed Church of America, and the United Church of Christ titled *A Formula of Agreement*. The covenant provides that these churches mutually recognize each other's ministry and clergy. A second major accomplishment was holding the first formal ecumenical dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church at the Vatican. The third accomplishment was to end the thirty-year dialogue with member churches of the Consultation on Church Union that worked to evolve a successor body of those churches.

Eugene Turner had the distinction of twice greeting Pope John Paul II in the Vatican and again as executive of the Synod of the Northeast when the pontiff visited Boston in 1979.

Dr. Turner has filled a number of distinguished roles at home and in the worldwide church. He has been the president of the New York State Council of Churches, a member of the Board of the National Council of Churches, U.S.A., and twice a representative of the PC(USA) to the World Council of Churches (WCC), in Canberra, Australia, and in

Harare, Zimbabwe. In Canberra he was elected a member of the Central Committee of the WCC, on which he served for seven years. He has also served on the Board of Trustees of Johnson C. Smith Seminary and on the board of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus. His work for the church has taken him to fifty-six countries on six continents.

Eugene Turner has authored a book and numerous essays and articles. He has received many awards and honors in recognition of his leadership in church and society. In 1978, Bloomfield College in Bloomfield, New Jersey, conferred on him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.

Eugene is married to Sylvia Barbara Baskerville and is the father of two sons and a daughter.

Otis Turner



Otis Turner was born in Dawson, Georgia, in 1940, and grew up on a small family farm. His early education was in a one-room, two-teacher school nestled in woods adjacent to a railroad track and surrounded

by large farm plantations. The school had approximately thirty students in six grades. Although the daily four-mile walk to and from school was hard on his small, fragile frame, Dr. Turner's mother and teachers developed in him a passion for learning that became a driving force in his life. His mother taught him poems that he would eagerly recite at church functions. His early aspiration was to become a medical doctor.

After graduating from high school, Otis Turner attended Albany State University. He was there when the civil rights movement came to Albany, Georgia, and he found himself in the middle of the struggle for racial justice. He met Martin Luther King, Jr., and other civil

rights leaders. His encounter with King had a lasting impression on him, and King's philosophy became an influential force in his life. Turner joined the NAACP even though it was risky for him to do so. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology with minors in music, mathematics, and chemistry. When he applied for a teaching position in a public high school, he was asked if he was a member of the NAACP and whether he had been involved in the student protest and marches at Albany State. Knowing his answer would determine whether he got a much-needed job, he told the interviewers what they wanted to hear and he was hired. After teaching high school for one year, he joined the Peace Corps in 1963, where he served two years as a biology instructor at Mindanao Institute of Technology in the Philippines.

The Peace Corps was a turning point his life, for it was while serving in the Philippines that Dr. Turner answered the call to the ministry. After traveling around the world, he left the Peace Corps and entered Emory University School of Theology in 1965 where he earned B.D. and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. He did his doctoral dissertation on Martin Luther King, Jr., and Stokely Carmichael, the first on this topic at Emory. While at Emory, Dr. Turner was involved in campus ministry, a founding member of the Black Student Alliance, an associate director of Emory's Upward Bound Program, and associate editor of the *Emory Wheel*. One of his articles won a journalism award. He was one of the organizers of the first Martin Luther King Celebration at Emory University. Dr. Turner joined the United Presbyterian Church while at Emory and subsequently was ordained. He joined the faculty of Wofford College in 1972, and in 1977 he served as dean of students at the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind. In 1978, Dr. Turner accepted a call to join the national staff of the Presbyterian Church in the United States as director of the Council on Church and Race. It was here that

his intellectual gifts and vision of social justice merged and gave rise to a vibrant twenty-five-year ministry of social activism.

After reunion, Dr. Turner extensively expanded the racial justice policy base of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), making it possible for the church to respond to emerging issues in more timely and effective ways. He wrote the Minority Vendor Policy statement and moved it through the Council on Church and Race of the former PCUS to the General Assembly, where it was adopted. That policy is responsible for the current practices of the PC(USA)'s national office in Louisville, Kentucky, which now spends more money with minority-owned vendors than at any other time in denominational history. Dr. Turner was the driving force behind the research and development of the policy document *Facing Racism: A Vision of the Beloved Community*. Adopted by the 211th General Assembly (1999), this document is the roadmap for the PC(USA) Racial Justice Ministry for the first quarter of this century and the foundation of its antiracism ministry. Dr. Turner organized the denomination's antiracism program and provided antiracism training for hundreds of people in governing bodies, congregations, and Presbyterian Women. Because of his ministry, all staff at the national office take antiracism training.

Dr. Turner's research and analysis of racial justice issues and trends are highly regarded in the church. His policy work has positioned the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to remain on the cutting edge of the struggle for racial justice in the nation.

Dr. Turner developed the *Racial Ethnic Torch*, which is the only national publication of the denomination devoted exclusively to racial ethnic issues. He started the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration and the Black History Month celebration, both of which are part of the institutional life of the national office.

Anticipating that reunion was near at hand, Dr. Turner reorganized the Black Caucus in the former PCUS and provided the guidance that enabled it to merge with the Black Caucus in the United Presbyterian Church one year after reunion to form the current National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC).

Dr. Turner is a gifted speaker, lecturer, and writer. He has spoken and lectured on racial justice issues at churches, governing bodies, academic institutions, and elsewhere nationally and internationally. Among them are Emory University, Columbia Seminary, McCormick Seminary, the Interdenominational Theological Center, the University of the Western Cape in South Africa, and seminaries in Korea and Taiwan. His articles have been published in several church publications and the Jackson Advocate newspaper.

Dr. Turner has received more than thirty awards and certificates of honor. Among these are the Edler G. Hawkins Award and the Lawrence Bottoms Award. Dr. Turner was inducted into the Albany State University Alumni Hall of Fame. Recently, he was made a Kentucky Colonel, the highest honor given by the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, housed in the New York City Public Library, has made all of Dr. Turner's papers, including sermons, articles, lectures, speeches, and correspondence, part of its historic collection. The Schomburg Center contains the largest single collection of documents on Black history and culture in the nation.

Dr. Turner retired in March 2003, leaving a tangible imprint on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The power of his vision and ministry will continue to influence the denomination for many years.

These profiles were compiled by Rita Dixon and Vince Patton.

Remembering Departed Brothers and Sisters



**You have shared the sacred table.
You have expanded the sacred table.
You have demanded a place at the table.
You helped to create the agenda for the marketplace.
. . . You pushed the boundaries of time, space,
inclusivity, and hospitality.
You were the first and the last.
Alpha and Omega.**

Excerpt from Breakthroughs and Challenges, p. 3

Lawrence Wendell Bottoms

(1908-1995)



From pastor to moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.

After seminary training at the Reformed Theological Seminary of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Lawrence Bottoms returned to his

birthplace in Selma, Alabama, to his roots in the church of his childhood. His church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, was also known as the Covenantor Church. Lawrence Bottoms served three years in Selma before accepting a call in 1938 to a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, Grace Church in Louisville, Kentucky. This church had been developed through the work of William and Lucy Sheppard, the first African American missionaries to the Congo.

Grace Church had begun as a mission Sunday school. While listed as a member of Louisville Presbytery, it was controlled by the leadership of its sponsoring church rather than by its own session. Bottoms worked to move the church from presbytery support to congregational support and giving. He encouraged the women of the church to engage in the women's work of the presbytery. Teaching responsibility and self-respect became the touchstone of his ministry. His goal was to lead the congregation to respect themselves as children of God, and the presbytery and mission board to respect the image of God in them.

In addition to serving as pastor of Grace Church, Bottoms accepted a part-time position as regional director of Christian education in the Snedecor Memorial Synod. Snedecor Synod was the "Negro" synod of the Southeast Region. Bottoms was surprised to find that the PCUS had racially separated church courts. Having grown up in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, although born into

a rigidly segregated environment, he had both white and Black teachers. He also had the unusual experience of being a member of a multiracial congregation in which the pastors were sometimes white and sometimes Black. Bottoms' father was a teacher in the church school and an elder and clerk of the session in that church. The teachings and thinking of his Covenant faith had left an indelible imprint on him. He subsequently developed a concept of primary and secondary levels of *modus operandi*. Using the biblical symbols of Jerusalem and Babylon, he observed that while God has called people to live by the politics of the primary level (Jerusalem), we have chosen to live by the politics of the secondary level (Babylon). He began to teach Black Presbyterians to live in Jerusalem in the midst of Babylon. Much of his teachings for the whole church had to do with this concept of living at the primary or secondary level.

Lawrence Bottoms helped to develop the first Youth Conference for the Snedecor Memorial Synod. With funds from the Louisville churches, leadership from the Board of Christian Education, and participation by the young people of the Black churches, an interracial youth conference was held at Stillman College. This kind of thinking, teaching, and learning led to the dissolution of the Snedecor Synod in 1952, and the Black Presbyterian Leadership Caucus later emerged as a political structure for Black Presbyterians.

In 1950, Bottoms was asked to go to Richmond, Virginia, to survey an area in racial transition with a view to establishing a Black congregation. Instead of allowing Hanover Presbytery to plan the program for the Black residents, Bottoms encouraged the leaders of the presbytery to meet with Black community leaders to ascertain what they wanted in a church. For the first time white leaders of the presbytery met with middle-class Black leaders to talk about developing a church. From this meeting emerged the plans for All Souls Presbyterian Church of Richmond, which had Black and white leadership and became an

interracial church. The philosophy and plan hammered out at All Souls were adopted by the Committee of Negro Work (CNW), and \$2 million was raised by the church for Black church development. Through the CNW, a number of new Black churches were started, and Black membership in the PCUS churches increased from 3,000 to 7,000 members in three years.

In 1973, Bottoms succeeded Alex Batchelor as secretary of the Department of Negro Work for the PCUS. Prior to that he had held a number of national-level posts in his church: assistant secretary of the Division of Home Mission of the Board of Church Extension (1964 to 1966), associate secretary of the Division of Interpretation and Research for the Board of National Ministries (1967 to 1969), coordinator of Support Services (1969 to 1971), coordinator of Social Concerns (1971 to 1974), and from 1974 to 1976 he served as pastor of Oakhurst Presbyterian Church in Decatur, Georgia. During this time he also worked with Leon Anderson, regional director of Christian Education, and Mrs. A. L. DeVariest, a staff person on the Board of Women's Work.

The leadership of Lawrence W. Bottoms has not gone unrecognized. He was elected moderator of the Presbytery of Louisville, then elected moderator of the Synod of Kentucky. On June 16, 1974, he was chosen as moderator of the General Assembly of the PCUS. He received the Distinguished Service Award from Geneva College and delivered the Settles Lectures at Austin Theological Seminary. He was honored as the Distinguished American Minister to speak to the Armed Forces in Britain and Germany. A number of colleges conferred honorary degrees upon him. He was presented the Edler G. Hawkins Award by Black Presbyterians United in 1985.

Lawrence Bottoms attributed his success to the fact that he always tried to follow spiritual principles: first and foremost, it is God who gives us all things; and second, spiritual discipline gives insight into life. These insights can be used to affect structures.

He said, "I want to see Blacks realize that their gifts come from God, not the culture or the government. If they can understand that these gifts under the guidance of God are what gives them their place, they don't need to worry about their place in an evil structure." Both the local church and the denomination at large have benefited from the work he built on spiritual principles. Montreat Conference Center is integrated; there are no longer segregated presbyteries; approximately forty new Black churches were started during the period of his work; and Blacks are participating at all levels of the church. The work that Lawrence Bottoms built on spiritual foundations utilized the existing structures to enhance the life of all people and to bring Black Presbyterians into the full life of the church.

—Vera P. Swann

Mildred McKee Brown

(July 26, 1930–July 3, 1997)

Where there is no vision, the people perish.
(Proverbs 29:18a, KJV)

"Here comes this dreamer."
(Genesis 37:19b, NRSV)



Mildred McKee Brown had a vision for her people and the church, and it was shaped by a passion for justice and compassion. She was the dreamer who could dream of "God's will being done on earth as it is heaven." She could share the dream and interpret it for others, and she herself was actively involved in implementing her vision.

Mildred Brown was a faithful servant of her Lord. What she accomplished in life was commendable, but what was most outstanding about her was her faith. Trained as a social worker and nurtured by her Christian vocation, she was a force to be reckoned with in the church and in society. She understood

her responsibility for being ordained in the Presbyterian Church. Elder Brown understood she was ordained for function, not status, and she valued her service as an elder. When many women wanted to become ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, Mildred held up the concept of the priesthood of all believers and always saw herself as being involved in performing ministry. Her ministry was awesome!

I met Mildred in the 1970s. This was after I met the Rev. Edler Hawkins. Both impressed me as caring individuals who were involved in the life of the community as well as the church. Both possessed a gentleness, but both could be strong in their convictions and commitments. As Pastor James Allen has put it in a sermon, they were “strong as nails and soft as leather.” My first encounter with Mildred was at a racial ethnic team meeting in the Synod of the Northeast. When the question of leadership for the National Black Caucus arose, she was very clear in pointing out the particular needs at that particular time for Black Presbyterians. She was always keenly aware of the social, political, and economic climate in which ministry is to be done. Her voice of wisdom was not without a challenge to the caucus to have a broader vision.

Mildred freely gave of her wisdom and experience in the Presbyterian Church. As stated by Mary Jane Patterson, former director of the Presbyterian Church Washington Office, Mildred was called on by the warriors who were doing battle in the church and society. She could supply strategic information, such as who could be contacted as an ally, even when she herself was not present. She could be the activist when necessary, but she prepared herself and was able to distinguish between simply winning a battle or winning the war. She developed a plan of action and knew how to collaborate with and how to work for implementation and change.

I witnessed her interpersonal skills as she worked with the staff of Presbyterian governing bodies. In the 1980s, she made sure

women of color were included in the planning of national Economic Justice for Women conferences. She would not allow racial ethnic women to be seen as having fewer skills than their white sisters. When necessary, she would tutor her racial ethnic sisters, but she would also let white women know there is validity in doing things from a non-Western cultural viewpoint. As the national staff person for the Third World Women’s Coordinating Committee in the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), she was a teacher, mother, sister, and friend to a number of racial ethnic women who have gone on to make contributions in the church and in their communities. She never seemed to aspire to be a role model, but rather mentored or provided a mentor so women could develop their skills. She knew how to find resources for specific purposes—whether that meant scholarships or someone who could open doors.

Even while she staffed Third World Women, Mildred was also a leader among Black Presbyterians. She worked shoulder to shoulder with her brothers, not trying to outshine them and never allowing herself to be relegated as subservient. Although I did not know her during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, in conversations with and about her I learned that she paid her dues. Although civil rights laws changed things in the 1970s and 1980s, Mildred knew that we could not take anything for granted.

Mildred believed in education as a tool to achieve a better way of life in this society. In fact, that was a big appeal that Presbyterians had for her. She even personally organized fundraisers at her home for the United Negro College Fund. Her keen mind comprehended how an organization such as the church functioned and how to impact it from the inside. For Mildred, polity was more than being aware of some things in the *Book of Order*. She had hoped to use polity for acts of justice, or at least, not have it get in the way. She was open to learning from others. She seemed to have a talent for identifying a variety of

persons with skills and then matching those skills to a particular task.

In 1988, Mildred became a national staff member in the newly formed Evangelism and Church Development Ministry Unit. There she was able to bring her zeal for justice and combine it with action. She was willing to confront the complacency of some programs when justice demanded it. I think it was because her position was more than a job to her; it was a ministry that could make a difference in the lives of people beyond Sunday morning worship. It was about reminding congregations—and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—of the imperative in Matthew 25 to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, be compassionate with the stranger, and visit the sick and imprisoned. Mildred was never too proud to be concerned about the least of these.

I was fortunate to work with Mildred on two projects: one established to reduce teen pregnancy and the other to promote evangelism within African American congregations. Both projects involved issues of justice in African American communities. However, Mildred always responded to the issues as, first and foremost, a disciple of Christ. When she used her office to promote social and economic justice, she would not allow herself to be limited by “church policies” but rather stretched the policies to be more in conformity with the teachings of Jesus.

She found ways to produce culturally specific resources for Black Presbyterians. She was not so much an enabler as a source to help people identify and use their own power. This was evident as she worked with a generation of younger pastors and laypersons who are facing a different challenge to African Americans than the one confronted by the previous generation.

Some of the new trials and tribulations come from the society and the world. She was concerned about Black people in the Caribbean and Latin American nations, as well

as the countries of Mother Africa. However, a great concern was the changing of traditional African American values. She could listen and support new ideas related to Afrocentricity and the traditional Black church. Mildred used hospitality and food—traditional Black values—as a way to bond her colleagues in ministry regardless of their age or theological disposition.

Mildred’s legacy reminds us that people who do not value their culture, whether by ignoring it or allowing it to be commercially exploited, are in danger of losing their will to live little by little. A church that does not value the witness of God’s messengers, especially the ones whose dreams reveal God’s will, whether by ignoring or misinterpreting them, is in danger of losing its will to be faithful evangelists to present and future generations.

—Bernadine McRipley

James Hutten Costen, Sr.



James Hutten Costen was born October 5, 1931, in Omaha, Nebraska, to Mary Lou Brookings Costen and William James Costen. After completing his public school education, he enrolled at Johnson C. Smith

University in Charlotte, North Carolina, and graduated with honors in 1953. He entered seminary at the university and graduated with honors in 1956. He enrolled in the Master of Theology degree program at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and in 1964 became its first Black graduate.

After his ordination as a Presbyterian minister, Jim served as pastor of Mount Pisgah Presbyterian Church in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. He also served a Presbyterian church in Elm City, North Carolina, where he became involved in the civil rights struggle that helped to remove barriers to the participation of

African Americans in eastern North Carolina society. As organizing pastor of Church of the Master Presbyterian congregation in Atlanta, Georgia, one of the first interracial congregations in Atlanta, Jim continued a significant career in parish ministry. In 1969, following Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary's move from Charlotte to Atlanta, to become the Presbyterian constituent seminary of the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), Jim Costen was selected as its dean.

In 1982, Jim was elected moderator of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the highest elected office in the church. In 1983, Dr. Costen and Dr. John Anderson, moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, jointly presided at the reunion of the two Presbyterian bodies to form the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Jim played an important role in this historic event of the church.

In 1983, Jim Costen was elected president of ITC. Under his leadership, ITC made significant strides toward rebuilding itself. It earned a reputation as one of the nation's strongest theological schools, and, with an enrollment of approximately 450 students, was the largest predominantly Black seminary in the world. The institution's endowment and its faculty grew, both in number and quality. With Costen's encouragement the faculty produced numerous scholarly publications and actively contributed to the church and society.

During his professional career, Dr. Costen had many affiliations and belonged to many associations. He served as chairperson of the General Assembly Permanent Nominations Committee; the Design Team for Black Presbyterians United; the Board of Harbinson Development Corporation (a new town development in Columbia, South Carolina); Southeastern Regional Council; Atlanta University Center Council of Presidents; and the Minority Task Force on Reunion. He also served as vice chair of the General Assembly Council.

In addition, he served as a member or chair of the following: the Committee on Theological

Education; the Board of Trustees of the Fund for Theological Education and the United Negro College Fund; the Atlanta Theological Association; the Black Theology Project; the Visiting Committee of the Yale Divinity School; the Society for the Study of Black Religion; Past Presidents of Historical Black Colleges in Atlanta; and on the executive committee of the Association of Theological Schools.

Among his Atlanta civic commitments were: Southwest Atlantans for Progress (SWAP); Leadership Atlanta; Georgia Commission on the Holocaust; the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Business Development Committee; the Atlanta Urban Training Organization; the National Conference of Christians and Jews; the Christian Council of Metropolitan Atlanta; the boards of Capitol City Bank and Eastlake Community Foundation; and advisory groups for the Atlanta Olympic Games.

Upon his retirement from ITC, he was honored with the title of President Emeritus. Possessed of an insatiable commitment to do more to advance the kingdom of God, Jim became a volunteer in mission for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). He worked as director of development for the Presbyterian Church in East Africa, helping to raise monies to build a Presbyterian college to educate leaders for the church and community in Kenya. The funds have been used to build a library, student and faculty housing, and other facilities. One of the faculty housing units was dedicated in honor of Drs. James and Melva Costen.

Jim Costen was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Kappa Boule-Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society, and Theta Phi National Religious Honor Society. He received honorary doctoral degrees from Johnson C. Smith University, Missouri Valley College, Stillman College, Huron College, Barber-Scotia College, Shaw University, Bethune-Cookman College, Tusculum College, and the Interdenominational Theological Center. He received the Edler G. Hawkins Award from the National Black Presbyterian Caucus. In 2000, he was selected as the

Distinguished Alumnus of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary for the New Millennium.

Dr. Costen departed this life on April 11, 2003. He is survived by his wife, Dr. Melva Wilson Costen (Helmar Emil Nielson Professor of Worship and Music at ITC); two sons: James, Jr. of Kennesaw and Craig of Detroit; a daughter, Cheryl Costen-Clay of Atlanta; and one brother, William T. Costen.

I met Dr. Costen when he recruited me to be among the first group of students to enroll at the new seminary's Atlanta location. I found him to be warm and approachable as an educator and counselor; erudite as a communicator and interpreter of the seminary's work and mission; and well prepared to take the seminary to a higher level of service in theological education.

Jim Costen was a good mentor. His door was open for seminarians to walk in and share their joys and sorrows. We were invited into his home and church, where he would continue to nurture and support those under his tutelage. I recall looking forward to the "back to school" fellowship dinners. The food was always delicious, and the fellowship was warm and inviting. After a full-course meal, Dr. Costen would close our time together with the speech that most of us knew from memory. It was called the Johnson C. Smith Seminary Ethos Speech, and he continued to share it in his position as president of ITC. In pastoral conversations with his students, Dr. Costen would emphasize the importance of seminarians embracing four words: "Honesty, Integrity, Industry, and Commitment."

In my service as dean of the seminary, I have adopted this same speech. I continue to challenge our students with this special ethos, but I have added one new word to the title: "Stewardship." Dr. Costen also taught us to develop a loving and caring concern for our environment, health, family, community and institutions, especially Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary.

Dr. Costen's ministry blessed our lives in loving and caring ways. In the Old and New

Testaments, there are many beautiful passages describing what blessings look like: rivers running where once only deserts were, of lions lying down with lambs, of fields of wheat swaying and singing in the breeze, of every person having his or her own fruit tree. Jesus came to shower us with his grace and mercy, with his compassion and love. He came to heal the sick, to comfort the dying, to clothe the naked, to liberate the oppressed, to feed the hungry, to wipe away our tears and fears, and to give life and give it abundantly.

It is so wonderful when our lives are blessed and enriched by one of God's special people, like the late Rev. Dr. James Hutten Costen, Sr. His life and ministry embodied the teaching of Scripture, offering a gentle paradigm for how we, too, should seek to bless those we meet along life's journey of faith.

—Dr. David L. Wallace, Sr. Dean,
Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary

Clinton M. Marsh

October 28, 1916–November 1, 2002



Clinton Marsh, a patriarch of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), had one of the most diversified ministries in the denomination. A 1944 graduate of the Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary, he served in numerous capacities at the national, synod, and presbytery levels.

For eighteen years he was the pastor of the Witherspoon Church in Indianapolis. During those years he was a member of the Board of American Missions in the former United Presbyterian Church of North America, president of the Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis, moderator of the presbytery and synod, and a respected leader in civic and church organizations. Following his years in Indianapolis, he served as area secretary of Evangelism, interim synod executive for the

Synod of the South, and associate synod executive for the Synod of Nebraska.

His election as moderator of the General Assembly in 1973 was both preceded and followed by many outstanding contributions. Always an advocate of education, he was a member of the Board of Trustees of Warren Wilson College, Maryville College, and Pittsburgh Seminary. He was a frequent speaker and staunch supporter of New Wilmington Missionary Conference, interim dean of Johnson C. Smith Seminary, and president of Knoxville College.

Clinton Marsh was the organizing secretary of the All-Africa Conference of Churches. He was chosen by the African church leaders to be the administrator of the Ecumenical Program for the Emergency Action in Africa. In this capacity he worked with projects in twenty-eight African countries, helping them to meet their needs as they gained independence.

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship is on the long and varied list of Clinton's interests. He was moderator for many years and was awarded the title of Moderator Emeritus. He believed that peacemaking was a calling, not a conscience.

The Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association is on the list because of Clinton Marsh's participation in the Network on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse. He was devoted to the causes of social justice ministry and spoke and worked to eliminate the destruction caused by the use of alcohol.

During his last years, Marsh was an activist against gun violence. He envisioned and organized Georgians United Against Violence, and he was the driving force behind an anti-gun campaign in Atlanta led by Concerned Black Clergy.

A prolific writer, he contributed frequently to journals and newspapers. He authored *Evangelism Is . . .*, an examination of the dynamics of the growth and decline of the Presbyterian Church following World War II. Loved and respected nationally and

internationally, Clinton's calm and gentle spirit cloaked an unyielding conviction about the causes to which he gave his energy and his life.

—Agnes Marsh

Lillie A. Ross

March 22, 1901–August 31, 2003



“Mother Ross,” as she was affectionately called, was a fitting description of Lillie A. Ross, who taught elementary school in Baltimore, Maryland, for forty-two years. When she served as an elder at Madison

Avenue Presbyterian Church, the session recognized the impact of her ministry to children in the church through the years, and in 1987, she was named “Mother of the Church.” The church’s tutorial program was renamed the Lillie A. Ross Learning Center, and its preschool program was renamed the Lillie A. Ross Preschool Day Care. Lillie A. Ross was also the church’s first director of Christian Education.

She was appreciated by the secular world, too. Baltimore Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke honored her with a citation. State senators from Maryland, the governor of Maryland, former U.S. Representative Kweisi Mfume, and President George H. W. Bush gave Lillie A. Ross citations noting her community and church service. All of these honors came to this living witness who devoted so much of herself to public and religious education in the more than eighty years that she was a member of Madison Avenue Church. The return of one of her students from the years 1949 to 1950 to make a presentation in her honor at the Lillie A. Ross Learning Center is further testament of her influence over the years.

Lillie A. Ross was the first woman to be elected an elder in the Madison Avenue Church, and she was the first African American

woman to be elected a commissioner from the Presbytery of Baltimore to the General Assembly. At the time of the 209th General Assembly meeting in Syracuse, New York, in 1997, Lillie A. Ross had attended thirty-one assemblies, twenty-eight of which were at her own expense. Several General Assemblies have honored Ms. Ross for this outstanding record, especially in light of her nonagenarian status. At the 200th anniversary celebration of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a picture of Ms. Ross was hung in the special hall celebrating Presbyterianism through the years. She had been chosen as the only representative of her presbytery. In 1996, she was honored as a "Woman of Faith" by the Women's Ministries program area at the General Assembly. Her life and achievements are recorded in the book *Women of Faith of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1986 to 1996*. In the book, Lillie A. Ross is quoted as saying, "A vocation is what God gave you; an avocation is how you use what God gave you to work with."

Lillie A. Ross continued to work with Presbyterian Women over many years. She held offices at the congregational, presbytery, and synod levels. Additionally, she attended all of the Churchwide Gatherings of Presbyterian Women and the predecessor meetings until her health began to fail. Church Women United (CWU) was also a passion of Ms. Ross. In 1979, she was the first member of her Baltimore unit to be honored with a Valiant Woman Award. During her long life she served in many capacities, including as president of Church Women United of Greater Baltimore. She was the second Black person to serve in that capacity. As would be expected, she attended all of the CWU assemblies that were held.

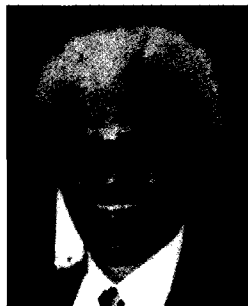
As the years passed Lillie A. Ross continued to be active—she was perhaps the most active member of her congregation. Her commitment to her congregation, the larger church, and her community makes her an exemplar of what a faithful witness can and should be. Awards and honors, therefore, continued to come to her, and she was inducted into the prestigious

Baltimore City Women's Hall of Fame in 1997. We salute our living witness who, nearing the century mark, passed into the Church Triumphant in September 2003.

—Bettie J. Durrab

Robert L. Shirley, Sr.

September 9, 1928–August 31, 2002



Robert Shirley was the son of the Rev. Frank Shirley and Anna Shirley. He was nurtured in the Biddleville Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, where his father was the pastor. Dr. Frank Shirley

later served as field representative of the Board of National Missions for Catawba Synod, foreshadowing his son's service as a staff member of the Catawba InterPresbyterial Unit many years later. Bob Shirley was educated in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg public school system. He graduated from Lincoln University with a baccalaureate degree in 1950 and received a Master of Divinity degree in 1953. Lincoln University conferred an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree on him in 1979. He served pastorates in New Jersey, Carolina, and Virginia.

Bob Shirley's special gift was in the area of administration. He was able to visualize the needs of churches, presbyteries, and communities, and write programs and proposals to fulfill immediate and long-range needs. As a member of the staff of the Catawba Synod and the Catawba InterPresbyterial Unit of the Piedmont Synod, he helped many churches and non-church organizations propose and fund social programs, including job training, housing, and tutoring. His genuine and relentless devotion to civil rights drove him on, despite criticism and adverse circumstances.

His advocacy of Johnson C. Smith Seminary was pivotal to that institution's survival. In 1968, the outlook for the seminary was bleak;

that year Shirley spoke to the General Assembly in Chicago championing Johnson C. Smith's continuance. After giving him a standing ovation, the General Assembly concurred with Bob Shirley's masterful presentation. Today Johnson C. Smith Seminary remains one of the twelve theological institutions related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is also one of the six constituent seminaries of the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta. What Bob articulated and supported so very well was the ecumenicity of the ITC

without blurring the denominational distinctiveness of Johnson C. Smith Seminary.

Dr. Shirley's ministry fulfilled the words of the prophet Habakkuk: "And the Lord answered me," and said, "Write the vision and make it plain . . . though it tarry wait for it, because it will surely come."

The Rev. Dr. Robert Shirley is survived by his wife, Laura; daughter, Sandra; son, Robert Shirley, Jr.; grandson, Fela Reynolds; and sister, May McDaniel.

—*Raymond Worsley*

Epilogue

L. Rita Dixon



As you read the articles in *Periscope 4* you will find that the spirit that called John Gloucester in 1807 to be the organizing pastor of First African Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia,

Pennsylvania, is still active among African American Presbyterians. If you notice carefully you will see the spirit's movement in each article, and you will feel it calling you to a deeper discipleship of Jesus Christ. It will continue to call you to follow Jesus into places where people are in need of change, hope, health, liberation, and abundant life.

We invite congregational leaders to maintain sets of 15 to 20 copies each of *Periscope 1, 2, 3, and 4* to use as resources for ongoing study of the African American Presbyterian witness and to develop a core of leaders on African American Presbyterian heritage and equip

them to lead study groups. The study groups could meet at least twice each year, once in the spring and once in the fall, or in some other arrangement according to the congregation's program schedule.

The year 2004 is just three years away from the 200th anniversary of the first African American Presbyterian congregation. Some of our leaders are already planning a celebration of our mother church and the Black Presbyterian heritage. We hope you will begin considering how your congregation will participate in celebrating this historic anniversary. We pray that every congregation will provide a creative commemorative program that involves the church and the community in giving God thanks for the great blessings we have received through the African American Presbyterian witness.

Begin now! Don't let this opportunity pass by your congregation!

