



Bishop T. Larry Kirkland, Chair, Commission on Publications
The Reverend Dr. Johnny Barbour, Jr., Publisher
The Reverend Dr. Calvin H. Sydnor III, the 20th Editor, *The Christian Recorder*

1. TCR EDITORIAL –NOT UNSUNG HEROES, BUT SUPERSTARS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH:

Dr. Calvin H. Sydnor III

The 20th Editor of *The Christian Recorder*

In sports, we recognize, commend and talk about the players who make the first-string. There is a great feeling about being on the first-string. Athletes who try out for sports' teams aspire to be on the first string. I have never met a person who said, "I want to be on the second string."

On my high school football team, we had several people who quit the team when they were not selected to be on the first-string. They aspired to be football stars and when they discovered that they could not be one of the stars, they quit.

In football, the quarterback and running backs seem to get the most recognition and praise. The linemen and other players get very little recognition unless they perform miraculous game-saving plays.

When I watch professional football, I am often amazed that when a receiver catches a pass, especially in the end zone; the quarterback receives all kinds of credit, even though the pass-receiver fought off all kinds of competitors when completing the catch. Announcers' praise of quarterbacks apparently have not been lost upon the players who catch the ball in the end zone because I notice that they do a lot of celebrating when they catch passes and make significant plays.

Basketball players who score a lot of points get a lot of praise and baseball players who hit lots of home runs receive a lot of praise and recognition from the fans.

Every player is not a superstar

Sometime fans tend to forget that there are a lot of unsung heroes who provide the impetus for a team's athletic stars to excel; and that's the reason, I really appreciate and respect star athletes who commend their teammates and who realize that they could not accomplish their feats alone.

And, of course there are those star athletes who seem to think that they accomplished all of their athletic feats alone.

Takes two to tango

There are “superheroes” and “unsung heroes” in all aspects of life, on athletic teams, in the academic community, on the playground, on our jobs, in professional life, in relationships and even in our homes.

Superheroes can't do it alone; they need to the support of the unsung heroes.

It does take “two to tango” and “a bird can't fly with one wing!”

And especially

And, we especially have unsung heroes in the church - in churches of all denominations!

Let me go off on a tangent

When I hear preachers and laypersons talk about what's needed in local churches and what helps churches to grow, the conversation always seems to gravitate to the music program. I hear preachers lament about the quality of the music selections and musicians, the choir, and all things related to the music program.

Some clergy members seem to believe if they could get the music program to a certain standard; their church would grow and strive.

Parishioners focus on the music program and it seems as if everyone wants to be in the choir. After the sermon, and sometimes more than the sermon, parishioners comment most about the choir and the music.

In many people's minds, the preacher, the musicians, and choir members are the superstars!

The unsung heroes

If I had to categorize the first team, I sincerely believe that the real “superheroes” of the church are the ushers; and in churches where they have greeters, the greeters are in the same category as the ushers – superheroes! In the context of this editorial I am including greeters with the ushers.

First-line contact

The ushers are the first-line contact with parishioners and guests who walk through the doors of the church. Their greeting and personal interaction can make parishioners and guests feel welcome or “turn them off.”

Ushers have a big responsibility and have always been important in public worship. Psalm 84:10 is so apropos when it says, “*For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*”

Ushers are superheroes

Ushers are superheroes because they have an important responsibility and contribute significantly to the overall worship experience. They greet people entering the sanctuary, direct and seat parishioners and guests, collect offerings, distribute bulletins, and alert

pastors when other clergy attend worship services and they notify the appropriate individuals if problems arise.

The ushers are the “face” of the local church because the ushers are the first expressions of the church that parishioners and guests meet when they attend worship. Ushers are the first representative of the church to leave a lasting “first impression” on worshippers.

Outstanding ushers function with precision and precision takes practice. Ushers should be committed to practice and committed to rehearse and practice their craft. Ushering is a profession.

Not just anybody

Ushers have an important function in the worship service and it is important that they are trained to know when to allow parishioners into the sanctuary and know how to direct parishioners during offerings and Holy Communion.

The duties of ushers do not end with the benediction; their duties end when everyone has exited the sanctuary. Ushers are responsible for “policing the sanctuary.” They are responsible for removing discarded bulletins, trash and other items from the pews because the sanctuary should always be in readiness for praise and prayer, which means that the sanctuary should always be clean and in order.

Ushers should greet people at the door with a welcoming spirit and a warm smile and should assist parishioners as they depart the sanctuary.

Two experiences

When I was in the Army I had an opportunity to pastor several large congregations. One was the Main Post Protestant Gospel Service at Fort Richardson, Alaska and the other was the Main Post General Protestant Service at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

In the Army, Gospel Services were usually predominantly black.

General Protestant-listed services were usually predominantly white. Both Gospel and General Protestant-listed services were mixed, but the name-designation gave a clue about the predominant racial character of the worship service.

Fort Richardson

The Main Post Protestant Gospel Service at Fort Richardson had the biggest choir on the relatively small post. I suspected that the background of most of the parishioners of the Gospel Service were Baptists.

The worship was spiritually active in the genre of the black worship experience.

The music program was superb, but I noticed that the attention and commitment of the usher board was meticulous. The people who served on the usher board were serious about their ministry and the usher board had meetings and rehearsals. The new members of the usher board were provided orientation sessions and ushers were assigned Sunday duties.

The ushers had prayer as a group before the worship, and sometimes with the choir.

An usher escorted everyone to where they wanted to sit; no one walked to the pew without being escorted by an usher.

When it was time for the offering, the ushers functioned in unison and there was not any confusion about their duties because they had attended usher rehearsals.

Fort Bragg

The Main Post Chapel General Protestant Service at Fort Bragg was the largest Protestant service on the large installation. I suspected that the background of most of the parishioners of the Main Post Protestant service were United Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopal, other sacramental denominations and Southern Baptists.

They had a full-fledged religious program. The choir was awesome and the tenor of the service reminded me of Ebenezer Rahway and Bethel, Ardmore, but less emotional.

The difference between the Gospel Service and the General Protestant Service was noticeable.

The one similarity was the attention paid to the ushers and the greeters. The coordinator for the ushers and greeters at the General Protestant service was Colonel Jack Cox and I remember his name 36 years later. He took his job seriously and he was in charge! He maintained the roster for the ushers and the greeters. They had scheduled rehearsals and if a person wanted to be an usher or a greeter, he or she had to attend usher training. And, not everyone who wanted to be an usher was selected.

The ushering at the Main Post Protestant Service at Fort Bragg, like the Gospel Service at Fort Richardson, functioned like clockwork! The greeters welcomed the parishioners and guests outside of the building as they were entering the building. The ushers greeted and seated the people in the sanctuary.

One religious program was predominantly black, the other predominantly white, but both programs understood that ushering was a first-team activity. Ushering was not a "Hey you" pickup activity. The people who served on the usher board knew they were on the first-team.

AME Church has first-team ushers

Many of our churches treat ushering as a first-team activity, but unfortunately some churches treat ushering as a second-string function in the church.

I first came to understand that ushers were superstars at St. James AME Church in Danville, Kentucky. The usher board was the strongest organization in the church. I saw how important they were in the life of the church and the contribution they added to the worship service. It was the first time in my life that I wished that I had been an usher; but growing up, I wanted to be a part of the choir. I saw the choir as the first-team and failed to understand that ushering was also a first-team function in the life of the church.

An usher is the entry or doorway to worship and he or she sets the tone for parishioners' worship experience.

Effective ushers are superstars, and amazingly, they are not the only unsung superstars.

Another unsung hero

The other unsung hero is not a person, but a thing. The "church bulletin" is the other superhero and the other gateway to the religious program.

When parishioners and guests receive the Sunday bulletin, the bulletin needs to be impeccable and without errors and misspellings. Parishioners and guests do not need to spend time critiquing or inwardly scrutinizing poorly assembled bulletins.

The Sunday church bulletin speaks volumes about how the local church leadership views ministry. The bulletin also indicates the attention that the pastor and officers pay to details. Poor bulletins are an indication of carelessness and inattention to details. A sloppy church bulletin is an indication of administrative sloppiness and spiritual laxity.

The choir, sermon, religious programs facilitate and retain parishioners, but the ushers and church bulletins are the gateways to evangelism and church growth.

The ushers are not unsung heroes, they are superheroes and they are on the first-team of ministry!

The church bulletin is an advertisement tool and should be prepared with care and diligence.

It does take "two to tango" and "birds can't fly with one wing."

2. TCR OP-ED - ALL COMPUTERS NEED VIRUS PROTECTION:

Yolanda L. Hinton

Your editorial on technology and email scams is quite poignant.

I do, however, take issue with something in it. You said "Unless you have a MAC, you must purchase virus protection." You seem to believe that Macintosh computers do not get viruses. This is a fallacy that should not be propagated.

I encourage *TCR* subscribers to read "Busting the Myth: Apple MACs Do Get Viruses!" Click or type the following address in your browser:

<http://drtech.bangordailynews.com/2013/04/14/new-products/busting-the-myth-apple-macs-do-get-viruses/>

I also recommend *The New York Times* article "Widespread Virus Proves Macs Are No Longer Safe from Hackers"

Not even Linux systems are immune to viruses. The Macintosh and Linux operating systems are less vulnerable than Windows, but they are still vulnerable. Mac users may not need to purchase virus protection but they must be aware that their systems are not immune from attack, and everyone, regardless of machine or operating system, should use an email program that scans for viruses.

Additionally, there are some excellent virus protection systems for Windows that are pre-installed or can be downloaded at no cost. It is not always necessary to purchase virus protection for these systems. The software, however, whether free or purchased, does need to be updated regularly with the latest virus definitions.

I agree that the *Bcc* field should be used when sending emails to multiple addresses, and that addressed should be deleted from messages before forwarding.

It is important, though, that people understand this will not solve the problem of spam and other unsolicited emails.

Every time we add ourselves to mailing lists, sign up for sweepstakes or contests, or fill out a web form, we risk our email addresses being sold to others, particularly other advertisers. Some sites, particularly those of retail stores, offer us the opportunity to opt out of email from their partners, but often we neglect to check that box. Others don't even offer the option but readily sell our email addresses, just as solicitors who use postal mail sell their address lists.

Please encourage our members to be selective about signing up for email newsletters and adding themselves to other lists.

3. JUDICIAL COUNCIL ISSUES THE FOLLOWING CHANGES IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS:

In compliance with the Judicial Council ruling the following changes in the Executive of the Council of Bishops are in effect:

- 1) Bishop Jeffrey N. Leath, Secretary
- 2) Bishop Julius H. McAllister, Sr., Assistant Secretary

Special thanks to Bishop E. Earl McCloud, Jr. for his diligence as Secretary these last three months and for his timely execution of the responsibilities of his office.

4. AME CHURCH OFFICIALLY SEVERES TIES WITH THE REV. JOHN J. HUNTER

*Cora Jackson-Fossett

Bishop T. Larry Kirkland, Sr., accepted the official withdrawal of the Rev. John J. Hunter from the AME Church late last month and has begun the Legal Separation Process compliant with AME Church Policy.

The Rev. John Hunter has requested withdrawal from Ministerial Orders, and submitted his resignation from the denomination.

"His withdrawal means that he is no longer authorized to oversee worship services, conduct marriage ceremonies, baptize congregants, officiate at funerals or act in any official capacity as a representative of the AME Church," said Bishop Kirkland.

The Book of Discipline that governs the AME Church mandates that when a person officially withdraws, he must surrender his credentials and the Bishop of said District must publically announce his separation.

In accepting and approving the Rev. Hunter's letter of withdrawal, Bishop Kirkland vowed promptly to legally dissolve the relationship according to the steps required by the AME Church.

See more at:

http://www.lasentinel.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11895:ame-church-officially-severs-ties-with-rev-john-j-hunter&catid=97:religion&Itemid=187#sthash.DsSU4h8l.dpuf

*Extracted from article written by Cora Jackson-Fossett, the Los Angeles Sentinel newspaper Religion Editor

5. I ASK:

Retired Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry

I Ask:

All three synoptic gospels record John the Baptist's prophecy that Jesus would "baptise in the Holy Spirit [and fire]". However, Bible-believing Christians hold differing views regarding what it means to be baptised in the Holy Spirit [and fire]. Bill Grover lists six widely-held views regarding the meaning of baptism in the Holy Spirit, which we can reduce to three major categories:

1) The baptism in the Spirit was a first-century experience by which believers were empowered; it has ceased and is no longer given to Christians.

2) The baptism in the Spirit is the experience of all Christians at the moment of conversion, by which the Holy Spirit regenerates them and adds them to the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

3) The baptism in the Spirit is the experience of some Christians after their conversion. It is viewed as a "second blessing" (separate from and subsequent to salvation). The purpose of the baptism is generally viewed as providing power for either (a) service [e.g. Pentecostals] or (b) sanctification [e.g. Methodists / Nazarenes].

Now I am meant to meet with a leader of my church, such as an elder, and discuss what my church believes about the baptism in the Holy Spirit and why we hold that view.

The Rev. Teboho G. Klaas, Pastor
Allen Temple A.M.E. Church
188 Ingedezi Street, Zone 7
1852 Meadowlands (Soweto)

Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry's response:

Within the Wesleyan tradition, baptism with the Holy Spirit has often been linked to a sanctified life. The Methodist Church has a sacramental view of baptism, believing that it is by both water and Spirit and "involves dying to sin, newness of life, and union with Christ, receiving the Holy Spirit, and incorporation into Christ's church." We also believe that baptism is the "doorway to the sanctified life" defined as "a gift of the gracious presence of the Holy Spirit, a yielding to the Spirit's power, a deepening of our love for God and neighbor." It is wrought by the baptism with or in-filling of the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service (From Wikipedia).

Reverend Klass, your item #2 simplifies the above article:

The baptism in the Spirit is the experience of all Christians at the moment of conversion, by which the Holy Spirit regenerates them and adds them to the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

As Methodists, we believe that the whole of I Corinthians 12 explains the working of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life.

6. MY JOURNEY THROUGH THE WESLEYAN/METHODIST FAMILY OF FAITH:

In August 2011, I had the privilege of being elected to a five-year term as the Youth and Young Adult Coordinator of the World Methodist Council. I am responsible for establishing relationships with the Youth and Young Adult groups of the 77 member churches that compose the Council. Even though my position is part-time, I frequently travel and am in constant communication with members of the Wesleyan/Methodist family from around the globe (indeed I'm on my way to London now for our 2013 Council Meeting).

Working with the World Methodist Council has given me a not only a deeper and richer understanding of Methodism but also a new perspective and appreciation of the AME Church.

This summer was an especially rich learning experience because from June to September I attended the following meetings: The Church of the Nazarene General Assembly, The Quadrennial Assembly of the Connectional Lay Council of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the Executive Committee meeting of the Council of Latin American and Caribbean Evangelical Methodist Churches (CIEMAL). Additionally, I met with the Bishop of the Methodist Church of Peru while I was working on my dissertation

proposal in Lima.

In each of the places I visited, I was humbled to be accepted not only as a Christian but also a member of the Wesleyan/Methodist family of faith. The sons and daughters of John Wesley share many things such as a love for hymns, a dedication to education, and a passion for advancing issues of social justice.

I also learned that while the AME Church has been active in the modern ecumenical movement since its inception, there are still swaths of the globe have not heard the story of Richard Allen or the contributions of African Methodism.

One of my proudest moments was sharing the documentary "Richard Allen: Apostle of Freedom" with the Board of CIEMAL as we applied to open relations with them through our work in the Caribbean and South America.

I also came away with some interesting observations. For example:

--The central focus for the vendor area at the Church of the Nazarene General Assembly was the church affiliated schools. Also, no candidates for General Superintendent (equivalent of Bishop) had booths.

--Clergy and lay youth workers as well as youth and young adult delegates actively participated in all aspects of the Nazarene Youth International meeting (including the elections).

--The AME Zion Church held all major connectional meetings this year in Montgomery, Alabama and many of the Bishops were in the city for two weeks.

--The AME Zion Connectional Lay Council has a tradition of marching before their meeting begins in order to highlight specific issues and gain media attention.

--The Methodist Church of Peru adopted a focus on Discipleship and held an intensive training session for all pastors in Lima this summer.

--The Methodist Church of Bolivia elected (and reelected) a lay person as Presiding Bishop when no member of the clergy could receive a majority of support from the assembly delegates.

My journey through our family of faith continues to teach me that the unique witness of the Wesleyan/Methodist tradition remains alive and vibrant. Yet, the AME voice in the family could be stronger. We have a wonderful legacy and continue to do good works that are worth sharing. I wonder, though, if what we transmit to the public is truly what is important to us. Only we can tell our story the way we wish it to be told.

John Thomas III is a Ph.D. student at the University of Chicago. He serves as an at-large member of the General Board and is the Coordinator of Youth and Young Adults for the World Methodist Council.

7. THE AGE OF CONTEXT: THE IMMINENT STORM:

*Dr. Gregory Kimble, LPC-S

The recent release of the book, *The Age of Context* by Robert Scoble & Shel Israel can serve as an excellent well-spring of thought-provoking considerations.

In the book introduction, the authors share the beginning of the movie, *Batman Begins*, with Batman coming to Police Commissioner Gordon in the midnight hour to say a storm is coming. Batman suddenly disappears into the night with the next two hours of the movie being chaotic before peace reoccurs.

The book, "*The Age of Context*" reminds the reader about the real event known as the "Perfect Storm," although the movie by Sebastian Coe shows it dramatically as an unfolding story. The "Perfect Storm" is caused by three separate meteorological events which converge into one super storm. The super storm known as a "perfect storm" occurs in nature about every one hundred years.

In this thoughtful consideration based on this article entitled, "The Imminent Storm" should produce a cognitive as well as emotive response from readers.

The new "imminent storm" in the African Methodist Episcopal Church goes beyond three natural events being realized now: 1) the graying of the pulpit and pew without significant new congregational growth, 2) continuance of current practices (e.g. the seven dying words of a church: "We have never done it this way"; and 3) economic uncertainty.

The graying of the pulpit to the pew should become an alarming fact that the adult children of the pulpit and pew may not be members of AMEC congregations. This should cause us to consider each time when a member dies and his or her name is placed on the deceased roll, a vacancy is created that is often not replaced with the accession of new members.

The concept of not being comfortable with new practices sets up a dynamic of doing the same thing but expecting a better result. The lack of accepting new ideas is most often met with resistance and well-coordinated methods to insure a new idea becomes a bad idea, even if the idea comes from the pastor.

The seven dying words of a congregation, "We have never done it this way!" becomes the standard *modus operandi*.

The real event of economic uncertainty must be clearly understood by all church leaders, as well as members.

The last several years with high unemployment, especially in the African American community, becomes extended to the church community of faith. Given that the graying of the church has also meant that many members find themselves doing the unthinkable of dipping into their retirement nest to help fund their adult children who need financial assistance.

A congregant may need to work longer to help defray additional financial burden to help family. This economic uncertainty has unfortunately led persons over 62 that may have a home paid for to, unfortunately, resort to getting a reverse mortgage to get money, not fully understanding that a reverse mortgage is a real-estate "pay-day" loan. One gets to stay in his or her house, but the money borrowed will have to be paid back whether by the owner or his or her estate.

It is a reality that a 55-year-old man may find that his job no longer needs his skills. The long-time employee could be replaced with a younger person that may work for \$16.00 an hour rather than \$36.00 an hour.

Loss of job economic crisis causes grief process in congregations. Parishioners may express moods of depression or anger.

In the Old Testament, a prophet was known for being "a seer." The seer would share with God's people about what will come in their future.

My 20-years as an Army officer allowed me to work as an operations officer, and at all levels of field or general grade authority assistant operations, there are officers who deal with future operations. Their work has the responsibility to focus on future operations and missions. Futuristic thinking and planning are common practices in the private and public sector.

There becomes a need for understanding the "Age of context." We must clearly understand the nature of the "imminent storm."

Just as Christians must believe in the "imminent return" of Christ without knowing when, we in the AME Church may not know when, but should prepare "for the when."

There is a need for forward-thinkers throughout the system of how church life must continue to exist. It becomes unfortunate that when persons think "outside the box" the person may become criticized rather than understood. "Outside of the box" thinking may serve as a prophetic explanation that God may desire a different course of action.

It is common for most people to react to an event rather than become proactive in reasonably predicting common natural events.

There are "common events" as well as "uncommon events." Simply put, there are events and things within one's control and events and things beyond one's control. Although both common and uncommon events can be planned for through common understanding, there is a need for putting every day occurrences into a context. Therefore, context becomes a powerful way to approach common events as well as uncommon events.

The "imminent storm" becomes an actual future event, whether one prepares for it or fails to prepare for it. The fact is that the storm is a natural event just as Jesus disciples experienced the storm on the sea. Jesus was aware that there was a storm but his disciples woke up in the midst of the storm and became afraid. Jesus slept peaceful because he had control of the storm and knew about the storm even before they got on the boat. Jesus could even walk on water through a storm but human beings most often become fearful of the "storms of life." People become fearful because they are not prepared for sudden unexpected and chaotic situations in life. As an acronym "Fear" is, "*False Evidence Appearing Real.*"

We must be willing to consider not only the "perfect storm," but the fact that the "imminent storm" will occur at some point in time.

One should not limit the perfect storm of having only three factors. Three factors are already mentioned in this essay, but the other two involve: 4) a lack of forward thinking (e.g. proactive approach to prepare for future possible occurrences); and 5) an actionable plan for strategic growth where growth in congregation is occurring. The "imminent storm" has five-factors, not three.

Without approaching a future plan for dealing with the five-factors mentioned in this essay, there will be an "imminent storm" at some point and time in the future.

The thing to remember about a storm is that a storm has the power to destroy what is old and allows for an opportunity to rebuild.

Jesus described the "Age of Context" when he made the statement about "putting new wine into old wine skins." New wine should be put into new wineskins.

The Law of "Unintended Consequences" proposed by Robert K. Merton is often not well-understood.

Simply put, the Law of "Unintended Consequences" presupposes that every human action or inaction will have at least one unintended consequence. The unintended consequence will cause an unforeseen event; and will most likely have unforeseen effects.

Unforeseen event have side-effects. The side-effects occur because of three primary reasons: 1) there are positive effects; 2) there are negative effects; and 3) there are perverse effects, i.e., when an intended solution makes a problem worse.

The unforeseen future event such as an "imminent storm" could have one of the side-effects mentioned above. Although human-beings

often don't consider the fact that one has just gone through a storm, about to enter a storm, or is in the midst of the storm. There is peace being at the center of a natural storm.

This calls for humans to understand that "context" becomes a friend, not a foe. Complacency is a Christian's worst enemy.

At the beginning of the article an illustration is given about Batman in the middle of the night with a prophetic insight that a storm is coming.

The Old Testament prophets stated this long before Batman told Commissioner Gordon that events are about to happen that will be chaotic.

The principle of chaos theory allows one to see value in an opportunity to rebuild after a chaotic event such as a tornado or super storm like a hurricane. It is essential to consider what is ahead and have a future contingency for an "imminent storm."

*Dr. Gregory Kimble serves as pastor of Greater Harvest AMEC in Dallas, Texas. He has a private practice as a mental health clinician and does contract work as a consultant for the Department of Defense.

8. HOW TO RID YOUR CHURCH OF YOUNG PEOPLE:

By Ben Boruff Posted on February 27th, 2012

Young people are, by and large, missing from the church. This realization came one day when I opened my eyes and saw pews full of heads that were, with few exceptions, bald, gray, or slightly wrinkled. You may suggest, of course, that a percentage of those bald, wrinkled heads belonged to newborns, but you'd be mistaken. Very few babies attended church that day, and the yells and cries of those that did suggested that they were as surprised by the lack of young people as I was.

As a Christian young person myself, this revelation baffled me, and I felt it was my duty to communicate this oversight to the rest of my denomination. After several sincere attempts, I was told that churches were already aware of the declining population of churchgoing young people. Church leaders had also observed the gray heads and had produced reports that detailed the phenomenon's evolution. Many expressed desires that young people attend church, and some even suggested that action should be taken. Thinking that perhaps these congregations simply did not know how to seek out and engage young people, I suggested that they do research and discover effective ways to fellowship with youth and young adults.

I was, once again, surprised by the Christians' competency. These churchgoers already knew how to engage young people. They had written articles and preached sermons about effective practices, and they had created high-profile positions for specific youth: pedestals on which they placed hand-picked, well-groomed youngsters who offered advice on things that related directly (and only) to young people. Contrary to my initial thoughts, these Christians had been living the situation for the past few decades.

The lack of action amongst these congregations, however, continued to confuse me. They comprehended the situation, and they understood how to fix the problem. It was as though their good ideas were overshadowed by some unspoken rule. It took quite some time for my naïve mind to find the only logical conclusion: These churchgoers did not want young people in their churches.

I realized that perhaps these Christians were quietly trying to rid themselves of young people and simply did not know how to finish the job. Young people are, after all, opinionated and hormonal, and they tend to use copious amounts of technology. It is understandable why any person with an interest in routine and purity would want to exclude this obnoxious demographic. So, in a spirit of Christian solidarity, I decided to help these churches expel young people once and for all.

The following strategies should, if executed properly, help to permanently distance any young people from your church.

- 1) Bore young people with vague affection. Talk often about loving young people, but never let that love result in anything tangible. Occasionally, you may be tempted to verbally scorn young people and drive them from your halls with acolyte sticks and hymnals. Resist. Young people are resilient and stubborn, and antagonizing them may give them reason to advocate for change. Instead, pretend you love young people, and talk often about the excitement you feel when you see them on Sunday. But when they express needs or have ideas, ignore them.
- 2) Do not, under any circumstance, ask young people what they want. When asked what they want, young people often answer honestly. They don't have the decency to hide desires behind fake smiles. If you ask what they want, they will expect you to give it to them. If young people are offered the worship and fellowship environments they want, they may flock to church. Better to restrict idea-giving to seniors.
- 3) Refit traditional services with guitars and muffins, but change nothing else. "Contemporary" services can be created as halfhearted gestures to young people. Offering sugary food and upbeat music without asking young people what types of food and music they prefer is like giving a friend a ride without asking where he wants to go.
- 4) Fill the church with references to past generations. Old paintings. Cross stitch samplers. Dated jokes. Allusions to cancelled television programs. Sermon illustrations that involve outdated technology. A barrage of generation-specific references will drive away even the most devout young person.
- 5) Refuse to acknowledge today's pop culture. Follow this rule: If you can't say something bad, don't say anything at all. Ignore Iron Man. Shun Sufjan Stevens. Avoid Apatow. Nix Nicki Minaj. Overlook online games. Forget Family Guy.
- 6) Use the phrase "does not condone" as much as possible. These words are nails on a chalkboard to most young people. If you must choose between "We advocate for" and "We do not condone," pick the latter every time. Condemnation is the church's youth repellent.
- 7) Whenever possible, remind young people that they are, indeed, young people. Sometimes youth must be reminded that they are not high on the Christian hierarchy. Mention how happy you are that someone of "their age" wants to be involved. Like dulling a work of art with camera flashes, overemphasizing a young person's age can ruin her or his spark.
- 8) Be unapologetically nostalgic. Talk often about when things were better, the days when the birds sang and politicians had class. As we know, the circumstances in which young people are immersed offer nothing good. Speak nostalgically often enough, and young people will see the church for what it rightfully is—a time capsule.

These guidelines will help any church rid itself of young people. Feel free to share them with mission teams, book clubs, and church choirs. But please move quickly. If I'm going to leave the church someday, I'd rather leave now and give myself time to find a more welcoming community.

*Ben Boruff, a senior at Indiana University, is a member of the United Methodist Church's Connectional Table and served on the Call to Action Steering Committee. This article first appeared in the United Methodist Reporter.

Topics Church decline Church growth Hospitality Humor Young adult

9. UNION BETHEL AME CHURCH BEGINS MENTORING PROGRAM FOR YOUNG MEN:

September 4, 2013 (Brandywine, MD) – While many churches went to the streets to protest the not-guilty verdict in the George

Zimmerman case, Union Bethel AME Church started a mentoring program. The all-male mentoring team adopted ten students at Gwynn Park Middle School, in Brandywine, Maryland. Most of these young men were in danger of having to repeat their most recent grade, lived in single-parent households and dealt with behavior issues. All the mentors are members from Union Bethel AME Church where Rev. Dr. Harry L. Seawright is the pastor. Pastor Seawright, who is very passionate about this program states, "Now is the time for us to bring positive Christian role models in the lives of these young men".

In response to the murder of Trayvon Martin, the mentors held a workshop and activity designed to show the young men how to dress. They talked about wearing hoodies and low-rider pants and dressing in a presentable and respectable fashion. Bro. Rodney Taylor, Union Bethel's Minister to Men and the coordinator of the mentoring program, stated, "It was surprising to see how many young men did not know how to tie a necktie. But with many mothers raising sons in the absence of fathers, this [program] is a teachable moment for the young men to learn life lessons, skills for studying, [dealing with] racism and violence, college preparation and, of course, the goodness of God."

For the students who were on the verge of failing, after just a few months of mentoring, most of the young men were promoted, and they show daily improvement in class and at home. To assure a positive impact on the lives of these young men, the mentors' goals include one-on-one tutoring, field trips, rites of passage, developing positive relationships and a partnership with the parents and school staff. Although these male role models are extremely excited about the first group's success, they all remain committed to the task. They also believe that it takes a village to raise a child. They will continue to guide the students from boyhood to manhood.

Union Bethel AME Church is located at 6810 Floral Park Road, Brandywine, MD 20613. For additional information, please call 301-372-6036.

Submitted by Pamela King-Williams, Union Bethel AME Church - Public Relations Ministry

10. VERNON JORDAN TO SPEAK AT METROPOLITAN AME CHURCH ON SEPTEMBER 22:

WASHINGTON; Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., noted author, lawyer, investment banker and former civil rights leader, will be the featured speaker at the Men's Day Celebration at Metropolitan AME Church on Sunday, September 22. The congregation and community will convene in a single worship service at 10 a.m.

The special service, using the theme, "Mighty Men of Metropolitan: On the Solid Rock, Standing and Serving for 175 Years," is part of Metropolitan's year-long celebration of its 175-year history. Metropolitan, known as "the National Cathedral of African Methodism," will also feature all men of the church, young and old; the Men's Choir; presentation of the Legacy Award, and a full-course repast with musical entertainment. The Rev. Ronald E. Braxton, senior pastor, invites the entire community to attend this signal event.

Jordan is a Senior Managing Director of Lazard Frères & Co. and Senior Counsel of the law firm of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP. Earlier in his career, Jordan held positions that included: President and CEO of the National Urban League, Inc.; Executive Director of the United Negro College Fund, Director of the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council and Georgia Field Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. His presidential appointments include the President's Advisory Committee for the Points of Light Initiative Foundation, the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on South Africa and the Presidential Clemency Board; in 1992, he served as the Chairman of the Clinton Presidential Transition Team. He holds a number of corporate directorships and holds honorary degrees from more than 60 American colleges and universities. Jordan is the author of, "Vernon Can Read! A Memoir."

Free parking is available directly across from the church and at 1615 M St. NW.

11. SMITHSONIAN'S DR. JOHNNETTA COLE FEATURED SPEAKER AT HISTORIC METROPOLITAN AME CHURCH:

(Washington) Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole, director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art (NMAfA), will be the guest speaker at the historic Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church on Sunday, September 15, 2013, during a commemorative service beginning at 10:00 a.m. The church is located at 1518 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20005, only a few blocks from the White House. The spirit-filled service is being presented by Metropolitan's Circles of Twelve. The 175th Church Anniversary theme is, "On the Solid Rock: We Stand. We Serve." The event is one of several in a year-long celebration of this iconic church's history and anniversary.

Dr. Cole was appointed to the NMAfA in March, 2009. She currently serves on the Scholarly Advisory Board for the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, the construction of which will be completed on the National Mall by 2015. Before assuming her current position, Johnnetta Cole had a long and distinguished career as an educator and humanitarian. Through her work as a college president, university professor and through her published works, speeches and community service she has consistently addressed racial, gender, and all other forms of inequality.

Dr. Cole served as president of Spelman College and Bennett College for Women. She is the only person to have served as president of these two historically Black colleges for women in the United States. She is also Professor Emerita of Emory University from which she retired as Presidential Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, Women's Studies and African American Studies.

Founded in 1838, Metropolitan was formed by two existing churches: Israel Bethel A.M.E., founded in 1821 and Union Bethel A.M.E., which was also founded in 1838. The parent A.M.E. Church movement grew out of an anti-segregation protest in Philadelphia in 1787. Similarly, both Israel Bethel and Union Bethel began as a result of dissatisfaction among African Americans over racial segregation here in Washington at Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church. The name of the Church was officially changed to Metropolitan AME Church in 1872 at the Baltimore Conference.

The Circles of Twelve is affiliated with Metropolitan AME Church's outreach arm; the Daniel Alexander Payne Community Development Corporation. All are active members of the church, and are servant leaders devoting their time to prayer, partnership, preservation and philanthropy.

Senior Minister, the Reverend Dr. Ronald E. Braxton extends an invitation to the public to attend this commemorative service and celebration. Please contact the church office at 202 331-1426 for additional information about this celebration.

12. NAACP PRESIDENT AND CEO ANNOUNCES PLAN TO STEP DOWN FROM ASSOCIATION AT YEAR'S END:

Benjamin Todd Jealous will remain in role through December 31, 2013

(Baltimore, MD) – NAACP President and CEO Benjamin Todd Jealous today announced plans to transition out of his role as President and CEO on December 31, 2013. Roslyn M. Brock, Chairman of the NAACP Board of Directors, accepted his formal letter of notice this week.

"We thank President Jealous for his time leading the Association," stated Brock. "Under his leadership, the NAACP has built a highly competent staff that will carry our mission forward and meet the civil rights challenges of the 21st century. Our board, staff and volunteer leaders throughout the country deeply appreciate his sacrifice, and will continue to implement our game-changing goals for the next half century that include the restoration of Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, implementing Trayvon's Law, bolstering civic engagement efforts and ensuring our community is enrolled in the Affordable Care Act exchanges."

"The NAACP has always been the largest civil rights organization in the streets, and today it is also the largest civil rights organization online, on mobile and at the ballot box too," stated Jealous. "I am proud to leave the Association financially sound, sustainable,

focused, and more powerful than ever. Beginning next year, I look forward to pursuing opportunities in academia to train the next generation of leaders and, of course, spending a lot more time with my young family."

In recent years the NAACP has won state and local battles to abolish the death penalty, shrink prison systems, outlaw racial profiling, expand voting rights protections, reform gun laws, close dangerous power plants, expand early childhood education, secure health care coverage for the uninsured, and more.

The Association will continue its as an ally in the fights for workers' rights, women's rights, immigrants' rights, and marriage equality, as well as in the struggle to end the HIV epidemic.

13. THE 10TH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT 2013 SCHEDULE OF ANNUAL CONFERENCES:

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, Presiding Prelate

Mr. Stan McKenzie, Episcopal Supervisor

The Northwest Texas Annual Conference

September 10 - 14, 2013

The Rev. Dr. William Campbell, Host Pastor

Anderson Chapel AME Church, Host

1002 Jefferis Avenue

Killeen Texas 76543

254-690-5030

Opening and Closing of the Northwest Texas Annual Conference

Greater Vision Community Church

2000 E. Stan Schlueter Loop

Killeen, Texas 76542

Telephone: 254-200-4382

The North Texas Annual Conference

September 24 - 28, 2013

The Rev. Dr. Juan Tolliver, Host Pastor

St Paul AME Church- Host Church

2420 Metropolitan Ave.

Dallas, Texas 75215

214-421-1344

The Southwest Texas Annual Conference

October 8 - 12, 2013

The Rev. Dr. W. Raymond Bryant, Host Pastor

Bethel AME Church – Host Church

225 North Swiss Street

San Antonio, Texas 78202

The Texas Annual Conference

October 22 - 26, 2013

The Rev. Kevin L. Bullock, Sr., Host Pastor

Evangelist Chapel AME Church- Host Church

3401 Hondo St.
Houston, Texas 77051

2013 Planning Meeting

November 6-9, 2013

The Rev. Adam T. Carrington, Host Pastor
Grant Worship Center-Host Church
1701 Kramer Lane
Austin, Texas 78758
512-339-4726

Host Hotel: Hilton Garden Inn-Austin North
12400 N IH 35
Austin, Texas 78753
Telephone: 512-339-3626
Room Rate: \$109.00
Reservation Cut-Off Date: October 23, 2013
Group Name: 2013 Planner Meeting-10th District

14. HUNGER CONTINUES TO DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACT MILLIONS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS:

By Bishop Don DiXon Williams

According to new data released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 25.5 percent of African-American households suffered from food insecurity in 2012. This figure is nearly twice as high as the overall rate of food insecurity in the United States—14.5 percent of Americans, nearly 49 million people, lived in food insecure households in 2012. Food insecure households are those that often don't know where their next meal will come from.

"While hunger impacts far too many people in our country, we cannot ignore the disproportionate prevalence of hunger in the African-American community," said Rev. Don Williams, associate for African-American church relationships at Bread for the World. "The fact that so many people in this country continue to struggle to put food on the table is unconscionable."

African-American children also experienced higher than average food insecurity rates. According to the USDA report, nearly 16 million children—more than one in five—lived in food insecure households in 2012. This means that 21.6 percent of children were at risk for hunger, but the figure rises to 31.5 percent for African-American children.

The data also showed that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) provided assistance to 42 percent of food insecure households. SNAP is a lifeline for millions of hungry Americans, but all SNAP households will see their monthly benefits reduced on Nov. 1 and the House of Representatives is currently proposing to cut the program by \$40 billion.

"With nearly one in six Americans living in food insecure households, now is not the time to slash SNAP," said Williams. "Without federal safety net programs, which are essential in helping to keep hunger at bay, that figure would be even higher. Cutting \$40 billion from SNAP would remove as many as 6 million people from the program. This is unacceptable.

"We must remind members of Congress that they have a moral obligation to protect federal safety net programs. We cannot turn our backs on the 49 million Americans that live in food insecure households," Williams concluded.

Bishop Don DiXon Williams is racial-ethnic outreach at Bread for the World and sits on the Board of Bishops of the United Church of Jesus Christ, Baltimore, Md.

15. GETTING TO ZERO:

The regular column will resume next week.

16. iCHURCH COLUMN:

The regular column will resume next week.

17. MEDITATION BASED ON ISAIAH 40:21-31:

*The Rev. Dr. Joseph A. Darby

I'm writing this meditation after visiting the 136th session of the Columbia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church at Pine Grove AME Church in Columbia, South Carolina, where I was blessed to serve as pastor from 1985 to 1991. Pine Grove has changed considerably in the last 22 years. The facility that we envisioned way back then - when Pine Grove more than doubled in membership and was outgrowing its physical plant - is now a reality. The campus is larger, the old sanctuary is now a fellowship hall and the church now has a new, modern and spacious sanctuary.

Many of those who were leaders in the congregation 22 years ago are no longer active or have gone on to glory. Many of those who now lead the congregation were "new" members 22 years ago and were sometimes viewed with apprehensive suspicion by those who grew up in that church. They endured that suspicion and apprehension, never got discouraged, gave up or walked away and they're now leading the way in serving the Lord, nurturing new members and making a difference in the congregation and in the community.

Remember those who now lead Pine Grove AME Church as you travel life's roads. We'll all face opposition and obstacles in life sooner or later - difficult situations and difficult people that make us want to simply give up, give in, accept whatever comes our way and not "make waves."

When we realize, however, that Jesus never gave up on us and chose to give his life so that we can find pardon for our missteps and mistakes and have the promise of eternal life, we'll find new vision, new determination, fresh encouragement and marvelous inspiration to travel life's roads with assurance that we never walk alone.

We'll all face discouragement, disappointment and self-doubt sooner or later, but that's not what really matters. What really matters is that if we stay the course and trust God to give us strength for the journey, we'll find new comfort, new peace of mind and new encouragement in the words of the writer who said, "I hear the voice of Jesus telling me still to fight on, He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone."

Get Ready for Sunday, and have a great day in your house of worship!

*The Rev. Dr. Joseph A. Darby is the Presiding Elder of the Beaufort District of the South Carolina Annual Conference of the Seventh Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

18. EPISCOPAL, GENERAL OFFICER AND CLERGY FAMILY CONGRATULATORY ANNOUNCEMENTS:

-- The birth of Steven Anthony Cousin III to the Rev. Steven A. Cousin, Jr. and Dr. Christina Dickerson Cousin

With great joy, we announce the birth of Steven Anthony Cousin III, born Monday, September 9, 2013 at 10:23 a.m. at Yale New Haven

Children's Hospital. He was a healthy, bouncing 9 pound bundle of joy for his proud parents, the Rev. Steven A. Cousin, Jr. and Dr. Christina Dickerson Cousin. The Rev. Cousin is the pastor of Bethel AME Church in New Haven, Connecticut.

Steven III is the grandson of Dr. Dennis C. Dickerson, Retired General Officer, and Mrs. Mary A. E. Dickerson; Presiding Elder Steven A. Cousin, Sr., Kansas Nebraska District AMEC and Mrs. Linda Cousin; and Mr. Lorenzo Henderson and Mrs. Sybil Henderson of Bristol, Pennsylvania.

Retired Bishop Philip R. and Dr. Margaret Joan Cousin are the proud great-grandparents.

Congratulations may be sent to either of the following:

The Rev. Steven Cousin: sacousin@gmail.com

Dr. Christina Cousin: c.dickerson82@gmail.com

The Rev. Dr. Dennis Dickerson: dennis.c.dickerson@vanderbilt.edu

Presiding Elder Steven A. Cousin: scousin@kc.rr.com

Dr. M. Joan Cousin: mjoancousin@aol.com

Bishop P.R. Cousin: prc7696@aol.com

--The Rev. Dr. Charlotte Blake Sydnor accepts faculty position to teach in the Argosy University Counseling and Psychology Doctoral Program

The Rev. Dr. Charlotte Ann Blake Sydnor has accepted a position as Adjunct Faculty at Argosy University Nashville in the Counseling Education and Psychology Doctoral Program as of August 29, 2013. Dr. Sydnor will instruct pastors, lay ministers and counselors/therapists in Pastoral Community Counseling as they strive to receive their Ed D degrees. Please keep the pastor in prayer as she serves the church and community.

Congratulatory messages may be sent:

cbsydnor@aol.com

cbsydnor@bellsouth.net

-- Presiding Elder H. Charles Farris retires after 45 years of ministerial service and the Rev. and Mrs. Farris will Renew their 50th Anniversary Wedding Vows

The Reverend Dr. H. Charles Farris, Presiding Elder of the Phoenix Albuquerque District, Desert Mountain Annual Conference of the Fifth Episcopal District retired on August 24, 2013 after 45 years of ministerial service.

On Saturday, September 21, 2013 retired Presiding Elder H. Charles Farris and Mrs. Rayjo Farris will renew their 50th Anniversary Wedding vows in a formal ceremony at the Tanner Chapel AME Church, 20 South Eighth Street, Phoenix, AZ 85034 at 1 p.m. The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Thomas, Sr. is the pastor and officiant.

Congratulatory message can be emailed to:

Retired Presiding Elder H. Charles Farris: revhcfarris@yahoo.com

Mrs. Rayjo Farris: crjfarris@yahoo.com

19. CLERGY FAMILY BEREAVEMENT NOTICE:

We sorrowfully announce that Mr. William Swinton, Sr. entered into eternal rest, Wednesday, September 11, 2013.

Mr. Swinton was faithfully married to Sis. Elizabeth Swinton. He was the father of Rev. Dr. William Swinton, Jr., Pastor of Ebenezer AME Church, Charleston, SC, father-in-law of Sis. Cheryl F. Swinton, former YPD Director of the 7th Episcopal District, and grandfather of William 'Trey' Swinton, III and John C. Swinton.

The Christian Wake will be held
Monday, September 16, 2013
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Ebenezer AME
The Rev. Dr. William Swinton, Jr., Pastor
44 Nassau Street
Charleston, SC

Funeral Services will be held at Ebenezer AME Church
44 Nassau Street
Charleston, SC
Tuesday, September 17, 2013
11:00 a.m.

Entrusted with the care of the arrangements:

Fielding Home for Funerals
122 Logan Street
Charleston, SC 29401

P.O. Box 994
Charleston, SC 29402

Telephone: 843.722.3348.
www.fieldingfuneral.com

Condolences may be sent to:

The Rev. Dr. William Swinton, Jr.: pastorswinton@bellsouth.net
44 Nassau St.
Charleston, SC 29403

Residence Telephone: (843) 881-8454
Office: (843) 723-4660

20. CLERGY FAMILY BEREAVEMENT NOTICE:

We regret to inform you of the passing of Sister Rita Howard, First Lady of Holy Trinity AME Church North Las Vegas, Nevada. Sister Howard is the wife of the Reverend Delman Howard who is a member of the Judicial Council of the AME Church.

Services for Sister Rita Howard:

Friday, September 20, 2013 at 11:00 AM

First AME Church
2446 North Revere Street
North Las Vegas, NV. 89030

Telephone: 702.649.1774

Fax: 702.657.2989

Condolences may be sent to:

The Rev. Delman E. Howard and Family
6904 Homing Pigeon Place
North Las Vegas, NV 89084

21. CLERGY FAMILY BEREAVEMENT NOTICE:

With regret, we announce the passing of Ms. Patricia A. Carter, sister of the Rev. Anthony G. Carter, pastor of Quinn Chapel AME Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee and Mrs. Linda C. Finch, wife of the Rev. C. Robert Finch, Presiding Elder of the North Memphis District, West Tennessee Conference.

Funeral Arrangements for Ms. Patricia A. Carter:

The family visitation hour will be held Friday evening, September 13, 2013 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 p.m. at Taylor Funeral Home; 3417 Wilcox Boulevard in Memphis; telephone: 423-622-8152.

The Celebration of Life ceremony and worship service will be held at 12:00 noon Saturday, September 14, 2013 in the Taylor Funeral Home Chapel, with interment in the Greenwood cemetery.

Cards and other expressions of sympathy can be mailed to:

The Carter and Finch Family
2763 Colony Park Drive
Memphis, TN 38118

Or emailed to: lcfn811@aol.com

22. CONGRATULATORY ANNOUNCEMENTS PROVIDED BY:

Ora L. Easley, Administrator
AMEC Clergy Family Information Center
Email: Amespouses1@bellsouth.net
Web page: <http://www.amecfc.org/>
Phone: (615) 837-9736 (H)
Phone: (615) 833-6936 (O)
Cell: (615) 403-7751

Blog: <http://ameccfic.blogspot.com/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/AMEC_CFIC

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-AME-Church-Clergy-Family-Information-Center/167202414220>

23. CONDOLENCES TO THE BEREAVED FROM *THE CHRISTIAN RECORDER*:

The Chair of the Commission on Publications, the Right Reverend T. Larry Kirkland; the Publisher, the Reverend Dr. Johnny Barbour and the Editor of *The Christian Recorder*, the Reverend Dr. Calvin H. Sydnor III offer our condolences and prayers to those who have lost loved ones. We pray that the peace of Christ will be with you during this time of your bereavement.

Did someone you know pass this copy of *The Christian Recorder* to you? Get your own copy [HERE](#)
