

**AFRICAN AMERICAN PRESBYTERIANS**  
**Presbyteries of Charlotte, Providence, and Invited Guests**  
**Calling for the Order of the Day Summit**  
**October 15, 2011**

What is this summit about? Simply stated, the Calling of the Order of the Day Summit for African American Congregations hosted by the Presbytery of Charlotte is “A time to confront the reality of where our churches are and to examine our willingness to participate in the transformation of these congregations in such a way that we surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.”

It is about encouraging clergy and laity to let go of their grip on God’s Church, so that God might move in mysterious ways – God’s wonders to perform. It is about envisioning Christian leadership from a new perspective such as how Henri Nouwen writes of it in “In the Name of Jesus.” **“Now we have to turn to Jesus again because, after having asked Peter three times if he loved him more than others an dafter having commissioned him three times to be a shepherd, he said a very emphatic way:**

**‘In all truth I tell you when you were young you put on your Belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old You will stretch out your hands and somebody else will put A belt around you and take you where you would rather Not go’ (John 21:18).**

*The words are the words that made it possible for me to move from Harvard to L’Arche. They touch the core of Christian leadership and are spoken to offer us ever and again new ways to let go of the power and follow the humble way of Jesus. The world says, ‘When you were young you were dependent and could not go where you wanted, but when you grow old you will be able to make your own decisions, and go your own way, and control your own destiny.’ But Jesus has a different vision of maturity: It is the ability and willingness to be led where you would rather not go. Immediately after Peter has been commissioned to be a leader of his sheep, Jesus confronts him with the hard truth that the servant-leader is the leader who is being led to unknown, undesirable, and painful places. The way of the Christian leader is not the way of upward mobility in which our world has invested so much, but the way of downward mobility ending on the cross. This might sound morbid and masochistic, but for those who have heard the voice of the first love and said ‘yes’ to it, the downward-moving way of Jesus is the way to the joy and peace of God, a joy and peace that is not of this world.*

*Here we touch the most important quality of Christian leadership in the future. It is not a leadership of power and control, but a leadership of powerlessness and humility in which the suffering servant of God, Jesus Christ, is made manifest. I, obviously, am not speaking about a psychologically weak leadership in which the Christian leader is simply the passive victim of the manipulations of his milieu. No, I am speaking of a leadership in which power is constantly abandoned in favor of love. It is a true spiritual leadership. Powerlessness and humility in the spiritual life do not refer to people who have no spine and who let everyone else make decisions for them. They refer to people who are so deeply in love with Jesus that they are ready to follow him wherever he guides the, always trusting that, with him, they will find life and find it abundantly. (Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus, Pages 61-64.)*

The Summit will challenge our personal and corporate readiness to embrace ‘transformation that comes about by the reorienting and renewal of the mind by the Power of the Holy Spirit. It is about being open to the new life that God intends and willing to trust God to change our thoughts,

feelings, and behaviors so that we may serve Him effectively. Transformation occurs when we enter into full participation in the purpose of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. It occurs as we take seriously what Jesus took seriously.' (This excerpt is from the POC Strategic Plan to Building Healthy Churches adopted May 2009.)

The Summit is an invitation to pastors, commission lay-pastors, elders, deacons, laity, candidates, inquirers, and seminarians to embark upon a 24-month journey of confession, repenting, learning, redemption and walking by faith in a New Era of being of living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are embedding the entire day in the context of Worship. We are designing the day intentionally to create struggle, discomfort and eventually celebration. Each person is encouraged to examine God's call upon their life, as we believe God seeks to reclaim and transform our congregations.

In July 2006, representatives from 24 of the 28 African American congregations met at First United Presbyterian Church, Charlotte to converse about congregational health. Unfortunately, there was no follow-up to this gathering and congregations continue to struggle. We have now acquired the knowledge, skills, personnel, processes, effective strategies, and models to help congregations prepare for transform by the Power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot transform churches, only God can bring about transformation. However, we can prepare the soil for God to plant. The model we are using is built upon reclaiming Evangelism as our churches number one purpose for being.

The Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, Annie Scales Rogers Professor of Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, issued a Call for the Order of the Day in 2008 surrounding the inauguration of the Rev. Dr. Brian Blount as President of UTS. The response was fantastic, the content was on point and the presenters were "off the chain." Subsequent Orders have been held in Pittsburgh, Washington DC and Atlanta, Ga. A common theme throughout each has been the development of healthy clergy, healthy congregations and a determination to do for ourselves that which we have historically depended upon the systems to do.

We are adding to the past Order in a number of constructive ways by responding to items such as what is the African American agenda for our churches. What is the African American agenda for the presbytery? What do we have to say about the presbytery being hijack by so-called Christians who are angry about everything, bitter because of votes, and are unconcerned about living out the vows they affirmed at ordination?

Today, Saturday, October 15, 2011, we pray that Hearts will percolate, Minds be regulated, Souls revived, Relationships challenged, and lives will be changed by the Power of the Holy Spirit. Welcome to The Calling of the Order of the Day!

The Rev. Dr. John Pharr, Pastor Emeritus of Fifteen Street Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC and former Stated Clerk of National Capitol Union Presbytery writes in an article for the summit from which I quote, ***"According to Robert's Rules of Order, A Call for the Order of the Day is a privileged motion by which a member can require the assembly to conform to its agenda or prior order of business or to take up a general or specific order that is due to come up at that time, unless two-thirds of those voting wish to do otherwise."***

Mr. Moderator, if this Call is in order, then I move the Calling for the Order of the Day.

10/6/2011 9:53 AM