

NATIONAL BLACK PRESBYTERIAN CAUCUS
in Partnership with
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

September 2011

Volume 4, No 1



ARLENE W. GORDON ELECTED AS NEW PRESIDENT OF NBPC

The National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC), meeting as part of the Big Tent Conference, June 30-July 2, 2011, Indianapolis, Indiana, elected the Reverend Dr. Arlene W. Gordon, Sunrise, Florida, as its new president for a two-year term. She succeeds the Reverend Gregory Bentley, pastor, Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa, Alabama on the campus of Stillman College.

The new face of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus brings to this volunteer position skills and political acumen used as part of her positions as retired Presbytery Executive, Presbytery of Tropical Florida; Interim Presbytery Executive, Presbytery of Detroit; Staff for the General Assembly offices in Louisville; and Associate Pastor of the Sojourner Truth Presbyterian Church in Richmond, CA. She is a graduate of San Francisco Theological Seminary, M.Div. and United Theological Seminary, D.Min. Dr. Gordon is able to balance enthusiasm, a passion for justice, consummate knowledge, and faithfulness to her witness and service in the church, community, ecumenical and global community. She will lead the organization in a new and positive direction as her vision for NBPC seeks to "Grow Christ's Church Deep and Wide."

According to the newly elected president, in the first letter that she wrote to the constituency: "***There is much challenging work ahead! I am therefore grateful for your continued support. I believe this organization is more vital now than ever before as***

we continue to faithfully serve our beloved church. The work that was begun by faithful and concerned Black Presbyterians to call the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to accountability is still just as necessary in these current times. It is therefore incumbent upon each one of us to continue the important work that the National Black Presbyterian Caucus has done over the years to address the concerns and aspirations of Black Presbyterians and to keep our concerns and issues before the church at large.”

President-----Arlene W. Gordon

Vice President-----Robert Capers

Secretary-----Marvella Lambright

Treasurer-----A.W. Canada

See www.nationalnbpc.org

President’s Report – August, 2011

It is my hope that we have all enjoyed the summer break so far and are ready to roll up our sleeves and get to the badly needed work of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus.

Our website is up and running once again thanks to Ms. Wanda McNeill. We are in the process of beginning the newsletter again with special thanks to Ms. Bettie J. Durrah. We are now using the Free Conference Call system to conduct our business, thanks to Ms. Marvella Lambright for her skills in making this happen.

A letter introducing myself as the newly elected President and sharing a little of where we are as an organization has gone out to our constituency. A second letter has gone out to our mission partners sharing the same information and requesting their support.

It has been a busy first month as there were many issues that needed to be addressed immediately. Among those are the following:

- 1) A letter to the Rev. Dr. Tod Bolsinger, Moderator, GA Middle Governing Body Commission regarding the role of Synods.
- 2) An Executive Committee meeting to address some immediate concerns.
- 3) Resolution on behalf of NBPC to the Rev. Frank Colcough on the occasion of his retirement after 23 years of service to New Harmony Presbytery and 42 years of service to PC (USA)
- 4) Research and communication regarding the Stillman College Debt

There is still much to be done; however, I feel that we are moving forward and solicit your prayers and support as we continue on this journey together. Thanks for all that you are doing to help move things along in a positive manner.

The Reverend. Dr. Arlene W. Gordon
President

REFORMING PRESBYTERIANS (June 2011)

I happen to be addicted to a statement attributed to Dr. Leland Stanford Cozart, the first black president of Barber-Scotia College: ***“Because of the Presbyterian Church, the Negro in America today is infinitely the richer in body, mind, and spirit; because of the Negro, the Presbyterian Church is immeasurably more responsive to human needs, more brotherly and more Christian.”*** That statement has seemed to me so patently indisputable that I used to quote it in sermons and speeches at least a couple of times a year. These days I feel like quoting it whenever I address a Presbyterian audience. Why?

Because it appears to me that the largest ethnic minority group in this church is growing away from poor people, the Reformed faith, and ecumenism, and the majority group is growing away, at the same speed, from a former priority commitment to the black and Latino underclass. I fear that both black and white Presbyterians no longer care about history and its lessons. Laziness and indifference about history and theology—i.e., how God used these two parts of the church in the past—seem to prevent white Presbyterians from doing today what it takes to help minority churches become more stalwart physically, educationally and spiritually. The same creeping unhealthiness in our denomination keeps black churches from living out their historic mission of helping the Presbyterian Church become more responsive to the need for cooperation and collaboration among racial and ethnic groups, and more involved in the continuing struggle for liberation from prejudice, ignorance and the grinding poverty that still exists in our nation.

In this brief essay I am more concerned about black Presbyterians because I see us slipping more rapidly into disuse and even extinction. I wonder what Dr. Cozart would say about our relationship to the denomination today and its relationship to us?

What does it mean to be African American and Presbyterian in this second decade of the 21st century? That question is inescapable for anyone who cares about history, identity and mission. I mean-- to ask who we are as a people and who and what are we becoming in this rapidly changing world? And most importantly--what is it that God is calling us to be and to do in it?

We come to church and sit in our comfortable pews for a little less than two hours every Sunday. We consider it a bother to be asked to come back to carry the gospel into the neighborhood, to read a book, to discuss the question of ethnic identity, or to inquire what God is doing in our demographically-changing cities and suburbs, and what we should do to join God in humanizing the most difficult and exasperating situations around us. We have little sense of the spiritual and missional unity of black and interracial or interethnic congregations where we are. The consequence is apathy, a walled exclusivity, and flight to a selfish, individualistic salvation theology, mainly about “me and my family,” that flies in the face of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the whole earth.

There is, of course, no easy escape from this paralysis of Christian action. Obviously we need to talk, but more than that—we need to find out how to move from talk to action, to collaborative efforts with other Presbyterian and non-Presbyterian churches. We need more honest and mature educational materials for our children, and ourselves and we need more effective strategies for “gossiping the gospel” and demonstrating its power to make all of our communities and us more human. More like Jesus, through whom God is still reconciling all things on earth to himself (Colossians 1:20).

*Gayraud S. Wilmore, Author, **Black and Presbyterians: The Heritage and the Hope**, Witherspoon Press, 1998*



QUOTABLE QUOTES FROM BIG TENT CONFERENCE

“The claim that we cannot talk about politics in the church is dangerous because it leaves our voices silent.”

--J. Herbert Nelson, Director, Office of Public Witness

“Although my grandmother is 102, every time she stands up to speak, a 33-yr-year old Jesus rises up in her. My grandmother told me that the Lord is pruning the Presbyterian Church, so that it will be ready to blossom and bloom.”

--J. Herbert Nelson, Director, Office of Public Witness (Grandson of Lillie Nelson, elder, Goodwill Presbyterian Church, Sumter, SC)

“I think J. Herbert Nelson is the right person to speak the truth on public witness with his gift to stir the water and lift the gray mist that hovers and clouds the denomination’s integrity on so many issues.”

---Juanita Eldridge, Elder, Grace Presbyterian Church, Winston-Salem, NC

“Jesus was cross-cultural. In Christ, we should be too”

--Sterling Morse, Coordinator, Cross Cultural Ministries and Congregational Support

“Exegete their [your] neighborhood. Your church building is a witness, whether you do anything with the neighbors or not.”

--Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk, General Assembly, PC (USA)

“When we speak to family, we can choose between affirming how wonderful we are or challenging us to be more faithful to our call.”

----Bruce Reyes-Chow, former General Assembly Moderator

SCENES FROM THE BIG TENT CONFERENCE

June 30-July 2, 2011

Indianapolis, Indiana

(Pictures provided by Juanita Eldridge, Winston-Salem, NC)



CELEBRATIONS...

- **Bettie J. Durrah's** meditation, "*Expanding the Circle of Heritage and Hope*," has been published in the 20th Edition of *Circle of Prayer*, released in April of this year by the International Fellowship of the Least Coin, based in the Philippines. Her meditation is one of 20 that came from writers in various parts of the world, including Fiji, Australia, Korea, Canada, England, Togo, Uruguay, United Kingdom, and other places. Three other writers came from the United States. The picture of the writers accompanies each meditation. The theme of this edition is "*Pray and Act for Change*" with the emphasis being on the environment
- **Joan Alston (Sacramento, CA)** spent more than a month working in the tornado-ravaged part of **Birmingham, AL**. She was on work assignment with **FEMA**.
- **Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather** were commissioned as mission co-workers during the Big Tent Conference to work in South Sudan. Shelvis and Nancy will work with RECONCILE (Resource Centre for Civil Leadership), an indigenous ecumenical Christian organization established in March 2004 by a national church council that promotes "peace-building" by providing training in trauma recovery, conflict transformation, and civic education. Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather are minister members of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta. *See article in this issue.*
- **Billy Honor** has been ordained as the designated pastor, New Life Presbyterian Church, College Park, Georgia.
- **Mary Newbern-Williams** has been installed as pastor, Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO.
- **Stephanny Graham** , as a member of the Decade of the Child Team, wrote two of the prayers found in the *2011 Mission Yearbook for Prayer and Study*, "*And How Are the Children?*" This section showed a view of children at the Close of the Decade, 2001-2011.
- **Barbara Campbell Davis** recently retired as presbytery executive, **Presbytery of New Hope (NC)**.
- **Elizabeth Nolan** (First African Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia) was 93 on August 9, 2011. She has spent part of the last three summers in the Columbus, Ohio Area, visiting with her daughter, **Adrienne Nolan Owens** (Bethany Presbyterian Church, Columbus).. Both mother and daughter attended the Big Tent Conference in Indianapolis this summer.

- **Brady Redford** is the part-time interim Director of Communications, Presbytery of Greater Atlanta. He is assuming the duties related to the Office of Communications during the maternity/family leave of the Director of Communications, Neema Cyrus-Franklin. Redford is a 2007 graduate of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary.
- **Vanessa Sharp** is a candidate for graduation from the Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Akropong-Akuepem, Ghana, West Africa on December 3, 2011. Following graduation, she plans to go to East Africa to study at African International University (also known as Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology)..
- **Evelyn Ellis** was ordained/installed as the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Waynesboro, GA on July 17, 2011. She follows her father, the late **John Ellis**, in this capacity. **Melva Wilson Costen** was a member of the Commission.
- **Katie Geneva Cannon** is one of the two professors at Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, VA, whose pictures are found as part of an advertisement for the seminary.
- “Ties That Bind—The Presbyterian Church and Race” was the theme for a Presbyterian History and Reformed Theology Summer Series, held at Montreat Conference Center, July 18-21, 2011. Columbia Theological Seminary, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, and Montreat sponsored this series to “present aspects of the ways African American and European American descendants in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have related to each other and the ways these historic patterns shape our ties in the church and the world today.” Speakers/presenters included **Joseph L. Roberts, Deborah F. Mullen, Paul T. Roberts, Timothy B. Tyson (Blood Done Signed My Name), Mary D. Williams, J. Herbert Nelson,** and **Gail P. Nelson. Mark Lomax** and **Nibs Stroupe** were among the responders. Afternoon presentations were open to the public.
- **James Foster Reese** was one of the leaders for the 88th Bible conference at Massanetta Springs Conference Center, Harrisburg, VA held this past summer.
- **Elmwood United Presbyterian Church (East Orange, NJ)** will celebrate its 50th Anniversary, October 1, 2011. Robert Burkins is the pastor of the “Church in Three Locations.”
- **Olive Mahabir** and **Leslie Essien** are new staff members of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary as Associate for Seminary Relations and Director of Development, respectively.

- **Floyd Rhodes** has moved back to Atlanta and has transferred his membership back to the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta.
- **CeCe Armstrong**, a 2010 graduate of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, is one of the 10 seminary graduates selected for the Pastoral Residency Program, “For Such a Time as This.” She will serve for a two-year term at Grace Presbyterian Church, Lantana, FL (Presbytery of Tropical Florida).
- **Stephen Lewis** is vice president of Program and President-Elect of The Fund for Theological Education (FTE), which is based in Atlanta. A Baptist minister, who has spent 8 years with FTE, he will become president October 1, 2011. At one time, **J. Oscar McCloud** held this position when FTE was based in New York City.
- The **Southern Baptist Convention** elected its first African American vice president at its June 2011, meeting in Phoenix. **Fred Luter, Jr.**, pastor, Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, LA was elected to this position.
- **Bettie J. Durrah** has written an article, “Women, the Church and Power: One Woman’s View,” published in the September/October issue of *Horizons* Magazine, a publication of Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
- **Charles Marks, Jr.** has retired as chaplain, San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, CA.
- The **2011 African American Executive Leadership Seminar** was held at Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, NC, August 28-31, 2011.
- **Howard Bryant** is the new Internet Coordinator for the Circle of Elders. **Eugene Turner** had served admirably for a number of years before giving it up to pursue other writing interests.
- The Presbytery of New Harmony honored **Franklin D. Colclough** on his retirement, August 20, 2011, at First Presbyterian Church, Sumter, SC.
- A **Calling for the Order of the Day Conference** is being sponsored by the Presbytery of Charlotte in Charlotte, NC, October 15, 2011.
- **Alice Ridgell**, organizing pastor, The New Faith Church, Greenwood, SC, was a preacher for the Engage Conference, August 11, 2011, in St. Petersburg, FL.
- **Lonnie Oliver** received the 2011 Edler Hawkins Award at the Elder Hawkins Banquet during the Big Tent Conference this summer.
- **Greg Thomas** is the Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Whitewater (Indianapolis). Other African Americans serving in that capacity are **Warren McNeill** (Newark); **Cornell Edwards** (New York City); **Donnie R. Woods** (Presbyter/Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Charleston-Atlantic).

PRESBYTERIAN MARINERS FAMILY MINISTRY GRANT

The **Presbyterian Mariners Family Ministry Grant** is awarded on a funds available basis to eligible applicants through Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations, church organizations or presbyteries. Projects eligible for consideration will create or redesign opportunities for family ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Successful projects will propose ways to encourage nurture and strengthen family ministry and provide measurable goals for evaluation. This grant is available through the Office of Vocation/Financial Aid for Studies. To download an application, visit the website.

Patricia Reed, elder McClintock Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC and student at Union Presbyterian Seminary at Charlotte, applied for a grant for her church which has an active Mariners ministry. McClintock Church has just completed a yearlong outreach project. called “Family Matters Project.”

Even though Presbyterian Mariners are no longer organized nationally, McClintock Presbyterian Church is one of those churches across the denomination with a Mariners ministry. A news article concerning the project can be found on the web site.

A RESOURCE RECOMMENDATION FROM ROBINA WINBUSH

Some of you may have heard about resource recently published by the World Communion of Reformed Churches. [Righting Her Story: Caribbean Women Encounter the Bible Story](#) ed. Patricia Sheeratan-Bisnauth was born out of a consultation with women and men in the Caribbean who read scripture in their own particular context, with particular attention on implication for women. The consultation involved ordained women and men, lay women and men and activist both in the Caribbean and the Diaspora. It is my understanding that such a resource drawing on the theological insights of Caribbean women and their supporters has not been published before. The following link will take you to a **PDF** file with the whole book.

http://www.wcrc.ch/sites/default/files/110554_WCRC_book_web_0.pdf or you may order a printed copy from the World Communion of Reformed Churches by visiting their website www.wcrc.ch and clicking on the publications link. If you are able, I encourage you to support the project by purchasing the book.

A RETURN TO AFRICA

I was told by my mentor William (Bill) Mercer that ministry and mission are where you find them. But, Bill didn't tell me that mission could be exciting, fulfilling, rewarding and challenging. Earline and I found all of these in our mission (2003-2005) in Malawi, Africa, where we served as volunteer missionaries for the National Black Presbyterian Caucus, PC (USA).

During our first trip we developed three ministry projects:

1. We assisted local church congregations to replace/ upgrade their straw roofs with tin.
2. We established feeding stations for orphans in remote villages.
3. We assisted village orphans with tuition to elementary and secondary schools.

On our recent return, we discovered two new challenging projects:

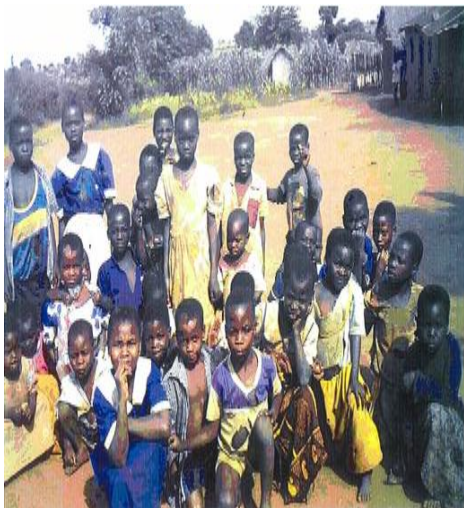
1. **The Widows of the Kafita Church(Presbyterian CCAP) in Lilongwe.** On their meager incomes they have established sewing classes among themselves. They are making clothes for local orphans using old foot paddling sewing machines. (My Grandmother had one.)
2. **The Crisis Nursery at Mzuzu** that takes in abandon and unwanted new born babies for the first six months of their lives. These unwanted babies are later given to orphanages or placed with extended families.

These projects need your prayers and financial support immediately.

Thank God our recent trip wasn't all work. We had fun getting there with stops in Italy and Ethiopia; we had friends and supporters waiting for us at the airport; we visited our friends Kafumbi Njewa, Barbara Nagy (Nkhoma Hospital), Rev. A.K. Mwale,(Nkhoma Synod), Jodi & Jim McGill and Gen. Sec. Levi Nyondo of the Synod of Livingstonia. It was a blessing to share treats (fish, soap & candy) with the children in two remote villages.

So you see, Earline and I have found our ministry and mission. Have you found yours? If not, we invited you and your church join us in supporting these mission projects through the NBPC African Connection. You may do so by sending your donation to: 134 Oak Bend Drive, Stockbridge, GA 30281. For more information call 770-474 5626, or email oasdante@bellsouth.net

--Otis/Earline Smith, National Black Presbyterian Caucus African Connection



CONNECTING WITH KENYAN SISTERS



The First Annual Kenyan Presbyterian Women's Gathering, billed as a convention, was held August 5-7, 2011, in Marietta, Georgia, hosted by the Kenyan American Community Church. The group was first organized in 2008 in Atlanta, Georgia. According to the promotional materials, the "agenda of the event was mainly fellowship and getting to know one another, and to find out what is taking place in the different states." The local host committee provided food and accommodations, and the Committee of Women of Color, Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, also made a contribution.

Under the theme, *"Trust in God"* (Samuel 1: 1-20), over sixty Kenyan women came from Boston, Grand Rapids (MI), Knoxville, Kansas City, Wichita, St. Louis, Raleigh, and the Atlanta, Georgia area (from Stockbridge to Acworth). 15-year old Maureen Libbywhite, on holiday from London, came with her aunt. Angel Suarez, associate for New Immigrants Congregational Support, and Ann Ferguson, staff, Presbyterian Women, both from Louisville, were also present as sponsors. The Reverend Dr. Jemimah Ngatia, coordinator of African Immigrant Women, Churchwide Coordinating Team, Presbyterian Women from St. Louis and Charity Wainaina, Moderator of National Kenyan American Women from Acworth, GA, served as the conveners, with many other women taking the lead with particular parts of the planned program from musical offerings to preparing/serving the meals to preaching to telling their stories.

Charity Wainaina, in her introductory remarks, reminded the gathered community *"We are all connected in different ways."* Connecting, therefore, remained a theme throughout the gathering. She illustrated through a story about how she has built connections on her job as she works with geriatric patients of different races, ethnicities, ages, and abilities. She uses the power of her melodious voice and sings a song to win them over, and the lines are somewhat like this:

"I am so happy that God made me.
You're my sister (mom, grandmother, father, etc)
I am so happy that the Lord made you
You are the my people that the Lord has made."

Jemimah Ngatia, the first Kenyan women ordained by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), briefly shared the history of the formation of the group. As Mary Kiraku introduced Sheila Louder, moderator of National Black Presbyterian Women, who made a presentation on *"Community Building,"* she said that Sheila had been intentional about making connections. She also acknowledged Maureen Hill and Bettie J. Durrah, who were also present. Ruth Ann Ketsler, moderator of Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, talked about *"The Future of Kenyan Presbyterian Women and PW."*

Jane Kagia, chaplain, and Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary graduate, talked briefly about the challenges in *"Reaching the New Immigrants in Atlanta."* In spite of language barriers, she cited ways in which the needs of Sudanese, and Congolese are being met and possibilities for future ministry with other than Kenyan women.

Following dinner on Friday evening, the Reverend Margaret Wameui Karanja (seminarian attending Luther Rice Seminary, Decatur, GA), preached the evening sermon, *"Encourage One Another,"* from Acts 27:33-28. She introduced her spouse, also clergy, the Reverend John Karanja Kamau. She used the story of Paul and his shipmates in

a raging storm, when Paul encourages them to eat so that they could survive. Using Paul as an example of disconnectedness, she suggested that we sometimes have to be *“disconnected to be connected.”* Going back and forth between delivering her spirited message in English and Kikuyu, in order to connect on a deeper level with her Kenyan sisters, the preacher ended with a musical offering.

Rahab Gitahi (wife of the pastor of the host church, Mrs.GG Gitahi) welcomed the women and suggested that *“If we would just love God in his simplicity, our faith walk would be so simple. Trust God as we have trusted our husbands.”* The Reverend Dr. GG Gitahi talked to the women about how things have changed. *“The women have taken over,” he said* *“The era of the man is gone.”*

Ann Ferguson, coordinator for Presbyterian Women, talked about **“Presbyterian Women—Mission and Celebration Giving.”** She introduced Alice Wyatt, Vice Moderator for Mission Relationships, to assist her in interpreting PW’s mission

Dr. Costen Nyambura (Melva Wilson Costen) was introduced by a former student of hers, Rahab Gitahi. In her talk on *“Family Relationships,”* this former professor of music and worship at the Interdenominational Theological Center, showed how the liturgical act of worship in the sanctuary is an extension of the family gathering. As she talked about the various parts of worship, she then related it to family situations. Table topics following the lecture, expounded on the question: *“How can family challenges be alleviated if we let ‘church’ permeate the rest of our lives?”* As the various groups reported out, Costen ended by saying *“Don’t separate what happens in liturgy on Sunday morning with what happens in the family.”* She began by giving accolades to Jesse Kamu, former seminary intern (and later top church official of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa) at Church of the Master, whose understanding of liturgy and family carried over as he served communion to the sick and shut-ins.

Angel Suarez, who provides support of New Immigrants, used a power point presentation to cite statistics regarding the changing population in the United States of America and what can be expected by the year 2042, and he also cited the present statistics in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with regards to the different racial and ethnic groups. He then talked about the various ways in which the Kenyan Community is connected through the Presbyterian Church. He ended by briefly mentioning five challenges for Kenyan Presbyterian Women, as they move away from traditional roles in ministry, and he ended by saying *“The Church does not need you to do more of the same. Do things differently.”* As he began, Suarez also acknowledged the presence of Bettie J. Durrah, Maureen Hill, and Sheila Louder, as long-time supporters of ministry with new immigrants. It should also be noted that the Reverend Gloria Chough and the Reverend Sylvia Wilson participated in several of the Saturday sessions.

A closing worship with communion was held in the adjacent chapel with Margaret W. Kamau preaching on *“Disconnected to be Connected.”* Using Hannah’s story, she said that we should *“push until something happens.”* Hannah pushed until she was given a son. The celebrants included Muthoni Wambui Ngaari, Jemimah Ngatia, and Margaret Kamau.

Praise and worship, dancing and singing, eating and sharing stories were integrally related to the entire gathering as the women connected in various ways. Many women wore traditional dresses for the Saturday celebration. One woman, Beatrice Kabuthia even provided a list of Swahili phrases for sisters who heritage was not Kenyan. Others periodically interpreted the meaning of the songs as women oftentimes spontaneously burst into song and dance. It was a great gathering for all women as they connected in many ways.

Bwana Asifiwe!
Praise God!



NBPC NEWSLETTER

In order to stay connected as members of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus, we need you to share newsworthy items of interest from all the regions. **Bettie J Durrah** has resumed the editorship of the newsletter for the next year. This electronic newsletter will be published quarterly. Send your information by email to **Bettie J. Durrah** (bjdurrah@aol.com).

NBPC WEBSITE

Have you visited the NBPC website recently? **Wanda McNeill** the webmaster, is working on keeping the information updated, and she needs your help in that matter. Additionally, if you write the webmaster, an automatic response is immediately generated. CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE!

WWW.nationalnbpc.org

July 7, 2011

Rev. Dr. Arlene Gordon
2740 E. Aragon Blvd., Unit 3
Sunrise, FL 33313

Dear Arlene:

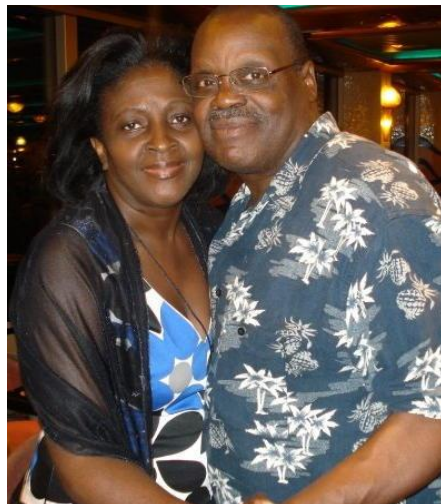
I was glad to see you at the Big Tent. As a follow-up to our conversation, my spouse and I have responded to the call of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to enter into His ministry of reconciliation, salvation, and redemption by serving as mission co-workers in Haiti. Philippians 2:3b-4 is the scripture that speaks to us: "Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing".

We will serve as facilitators of Presbyterian Response to Haiti. In collaboration with our partner church Episcopal Diocese of Haiti. The four major areas of concern identified by our partner church include: 1) build permanent housing; 2) rebuild schools; 3) community health/mental health; and, 4) food security. As facilitators, we will serve as connectors between the PC (USA), local congregations (including work groups), various organizations in Haiti, including the Haitian government, and our partner church in Haiti.

In order to carry out this ministry, we need partners and core team members who will provide support to us and funds that will go to various projects in Haiti. For individuals to provide support please use the following number: E200486. For congregations, the number is D507552. Carline and I are asking the Presbytery of Tropical Florida, congregations, and individuals to join with us in "bringing good news to the poor, release of the captives, sight to the blind, freedom for the oppressed, and the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

We welcome the opportunity to meet with congregations, individuals, and the Presbytery. For the next several weeks, Carline and I will be in Canada and Louisville, KY for training and orientation. Grace and peace,

Rev. Dr. Kenneth & Carline White (772) 249-5013



Peace Educators, South Sudan

Position: Peace Educators

Organization: RECONCILE International

Location: Yei, South Sudan

Ecumenical Partner: New Sudan Council of Churches

Mission Co-workers: Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather

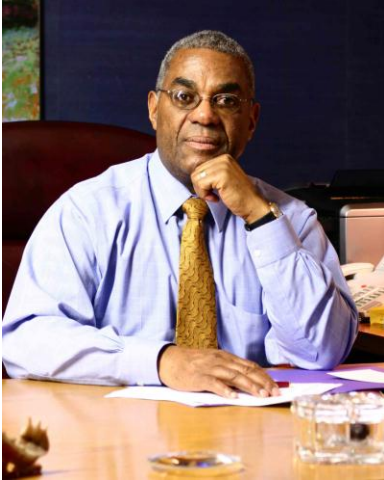
Position Profile: Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather will be working with RECONCILE, (Resource Centre for Civil Leadership), an indigenous ecumenical Christian organization, which was established in March 2004 by a national church council. It promotes "peace-building" by providing training in trauma recovery, conflict transformation, and civic education. RECONCILE's activities are in areas of high inter-ethnic conflict, with the churches often being the typical point of entry into these communities. Shelvis and Nancy will participate in RECONCILE's training events that address inter-ethnic conflict. Shelvis will be principal of the Peace Institute which offers three-month courses in community-based trauma healing, peace studies and conflict transformation.

Country Context: In early 2011, the people of South Sudan voted to separate from the Khartoum-based government of Sudan and form an independent country. The referendum was part of a 2005 peace accord that ended decades of civil war between rebels in the South (mainly black Africans) and government forces from the North (mainly Arabs). Most people in the South are Christians or adherents of traditional

African religions, while most people in the North are Muslim. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been involved in Sudan for more than a century and has longstanding relationships with two partner churches, the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) and the Presbyterian Church of Sudan (PCOS). The PCOS is the primary Presbyterian denomination serving South Sudan. The years of civil war left South Sudan's infrastructure in ruins, but the region is home to abundant natural resources and many faithful people. The PC(USA) is working with Sudanese partners to help South Sudan maximize the promise of independence and improve the plight of the people.



Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather Profile: Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather are going to South Sudan deeply aware of this pivotal time in its history and firmly committed to helping its churches build a better future for the region.



It's a Family Affair: The State of the Black Family, Speech given at the Opening Plenary before the National Black Presbyterian Caucus, John W. Garland, President, Central State University on June 30, 2011.

What is a family?

The traditional definition of family, such as that contained in Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, is defined as "the basic unit consisting of two parents raising their children." The U.S. Census defines a family as a "group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members) are considered as members of one family." The Census Bureau also has a definition for family group: "two or more people (not necessarily including a householder) residing together, and related by birth, marriage, or adoption."

Let's take a look at the data and Why is this a problem?

What are the causes behind the disintegration of the Black family?

There has been much discussion about the causes behind the disintegration of the traditional Black family. And there are several fundamental things to which we can point.

1. President Lyndon Johnson in his commencement address at Howard University in 1965 talked about the "the breakdown of the Negro family structure," and said it was "the consequence of ancient brutality, past injustice and present prejudice." He was referring, of course, to the long-term damage done by centuries of slavery and racial segregation and discrimination. ; 2. The effect of unemployment on the Black family. In my opinion, when unemployment is high, Black men suffer the most — as well as Black families.

Let's take a look at what was going on during the '60s and '70s, when the proportion of Black single-parent families rose so dramatically.

Joblessness, low educational attainment and poverty clearly have had an effect on the integrity of the Black family.

The effect of war on the Black family and The War on Drugs/Crime

Some facts about prisons and prisoners' mass incarceration

(Taken from The Sentencing Project, The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander, special issue of The Nation, "Dare to End the War on Drugs," December 13, 2010) In this way, according to Prof. Michelle Alexander, in her book *The New Jim Crow*, "a new racial under caste has been created in an astonishingly short period of time—a new Jim Crow system."

Some more sobering statistics And What else can your organizations do to stand up for the Black family?

Mentoring/After School Programs

Education

Counseling and workshops aimed at strengthening kinship relations

Services for at-risk populations , and Partnerships

Martin Luther King would extol us to band together, to create a mass movement, to patronize one another, to teach one another, to trust one another, to embrace one another, and of course, to love one another.

He would say that we hold our future in our hands, and it is our sacred duty to pass the torch and make right this place for today and tomorrow. He would challenge us to rededicate ourselves to the struggle for social justice, the elimination of poverty and the elimination of war.

He would say, “The time is always ripe to do right.”

A copy of this inspiring and informative speech may be requested from Marvella Lambright, the Secretary of National Black Presbyterian Caucus at Lambrightmc@aol.com.

**My 7-Minute Response to the Question,
“What Is Your Vision of the Church Jesus Want Us to Be?”
Friday, August 26th, 2011 Fellowship of the Presbyterians Gathering
The Rev. Robert N. Burkins**

The expression of one’s faith is significantly influenced by cultural, historical and racial factors. Therefore, as one of just a handful here whose face has been kissed by nature’s sun, it ought not surprise you that I bring a different perspective to our conversation. Even though I agree with the Presbyterian Church’s need for change on many fronts, I want to take a few moments by way of differentiation.

First of all, I was neither baptized in the name of evangelicals or progressives. I was baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. I stand as one who seeks daily to hear the voice of God in the midst of a rapidly changing context.

There is a long history in America of differing theological perspectives between Black and White Christians. Black Christians become understandably nervous in conversations about biblical authority and biblical interpretation – because white religious institutions attempted to justify the barbarity of chattel slavery by purporting that it was God’s will – citing the “curse of Ham” and Paul’s admonition for slaves to “obey” their masters.

Second, Amendment 10-A is not my issue, nor is it a front-burner issue among many African Americans. For me, diversity and inclusivity are not dirty words. To be different does not mean to be deficient.

You may ask, why am I here?" I am here because I too love the Church, and even more, I love the Lord of the Church and share your concern about the Church's future. So let me offer this, by way of my vision for the Church Jesus calls us to be.

First of all, I'm not quite sure Jesus envisioned an institutional Church, much less a Presbyterian Church. Rather, Jesus taught a way of being in relation with God that benefitted the poor, the oppressed, and those routinely pushed to the margins of society. Jesus' vision of the Church, by its very nature, upset Roman imperialist assumptions regarding power and privilege, and challenged the status quo piety of the works, righteousness oriented, post-exilic Jerusalem temple.

I believe Jesus is calling the Church to confess its collective sins, first to God, then to those who, because of the Church's confusion about what it means to be the Church, have been victims of rabid corporate greed born, in part, of the Church's refusal to speak truth to power and to be the moral and ethical voice of our time.

I believe the Lord of the Church is calling us to be a church that honors **both** arms of the cross – the vertical arm – which symbolizes our relationship with God who is above us, **and** the horizontal arm – which symbolizes our relationships with the children of God who live in the world beside us and all around us. I believe that favoring either of those arms to the exclusion of the other arm is a heresy. I believe Jesus is calling us to sound doctrine and personal piety, but expects us to be just as passionate in our social justice ministry. "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen." (1John 4:20, NIV)

Jesus says that not only are we to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, but we are also to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. And when pushed on that "neighbor" question, Jesus used the illustration of the Samaritan to emphasize that those whom we have been culturally taught to hate (as Jews and Samaritans were taught) are the very ones Jesus calls us to minister to sacrificially and unconditionally.

That means the Church should be engaged in ministry not only to the poor, the left out, the left behind, the immigrants and the racial "others," but it also means that the Church should be engaged in ministry to the Palestinians, the Dalit caste of India, the forgotten in Brazil, and those who live in the slums of South Africa, Indonesia, and America. For Jesus says, "in as much you have done it unto the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you have done it unto me."

I believe Jesus is calling us to **BE** the Church just as God entered history, which means on the side of the poor. I believe Jesus has challenged us through the prophet Martin Luther King, Jr., just as God challenged us through the prophets Amos, Jeremiah, and Isaiah – to confront the three-headed monster of racism, militarism, and materialism. Jesus did not come to earth as the incarnate God to make heaven a better place. Jesus came to earth to make earth a more loving and hospitable place. Jesus calls us to **follow** him,

and that following him means going where he goes, loving those whom he loves, and doing what he would do in confronting “the powers” that dehumanize those made in his image.

I believe Jesus is calling us to take seriously Micah 6, and to walk humbly **WITH** our God, which means walking where God walks – with the unemployed, the underemployed, the permanent underclass, those without healthcare, the masses who are incarcerated and to break apart the caste system created by the wealthy and the greedy in a country that is or was the richest country on the face of the earth.

For me, the real challenge of the church is whether or not we are willing to embody the teachings of Jesus in the 21st century, just as he asks us to be in the 1st century – “teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you.”

Finally, I believe Jesus is calling the church to the sobering realization that it’s not all about us. There is light at the end of the tunnel and life beyond the grave. We must not panic or become weary in well-doing. We are a resurrection people. It’s not just about numbers. It’s not just about size. It’s not about organization. It’s not about structures. It’s about being faithful. It’s about being obedient. It’s about following Jesus into places we would rather not go and to people we would rather not see. And when we put feet to faith, we shall discover that “God is able to do exceeding and abundantly above all we ask, think, or imagine.”

Let’s not spend so much time and energy trying to save ourselves. That’s not the mission of the Church. Plus, it won’t work! Because somewhere I read, “Whoever tries to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it” (Luke 17:33, International Standard Version). It’s not about saving our denomination. It’s about participating with Christ in the redemptive salvation of our world. “For God so loved--- not the church, not Presbyterians—but God so loved the **world** that he gave is only begotten son that **whosoever** believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life” And the only reason any of us are here today is because God was gracious enough to let us look at the “whosoever list,” and see our names.

MEMORIAL MOMENT

- **Mrs. Kierspen Tucker-Conner, Daughter of Iris Tucker-Lloyd**, August 19, 2011, Detroit, MI
- **Sylvester (Syl) Lorenzo Shannon**, June 7, 2011, Alexandria, VA
- **William G. Gillespie**, June 3, 2011, St. Louis, MO, former pastor, Cote Brillante Presbyterian Church for 53 years
- **Cordell Wynn**, former president, Stillman College, **April 28, 2010**, Tuscaloosa, AL.

DATES TO REMEMBER

October 20-23, 2011	Women of Color Consultation, Charlotte, NC
January 18-25, 2012	Week for Prayer and Christian Unity
February 27-March 9, 2012	56 th Session, Commission on the Status of Women United Nations Headquarters, New York
March 2-4, 2012	Womanist Legends Conference, New York
2013	World Council of Churches, 10 th Assembly, Busan, Korea

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