



Martin Luther King Jr. and William J. Seymour Leadership Forum

Report and Recommendations to the
Commission on Ethnicity

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King-Seymour Forum

Preamble

While early Azusa Street participants reflected that the “color line was washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ” history would indicate that American Pentecostals have emerged largely along separate racial lines. Pentecostals must give new meaning to our claims of believing in the “Full Gospel.” Such a designation calls us to realize there are crevices of society where God’s transforming Spirit must be allowed to more fully permeate.

One of the most unrealized strategies of the church is to affirm a future that will aggressively establish churches that willfully build communities of believers that reflect ethnic diversity. The vitality of the Church at Antioch was built around the power of the Spirit to change lives and an intentional inclusion of all classes and ethnic groups. Such a community that counters society’s tendency to isolate and separate was given clear recognition by the citizens of Antioch. Such recognition was connected to the unique picture of inclusion that the Antioch church represented (see Acts 11-13 as a case study).

It is time for the broadest legacy of the Full Gospel to be unleashed. It is time for the glimpse of the Full Gospel seen at Azusa Street to permeate our churches to a more complete extent. The Full Gospel is our heritage—racial reconciliation is a gift from God that can release us to a new century of vitality.

The Problem

Current statistics indicate that 34% of attendees at A/G churches are ethnic minority. The question arises as to what level of participation in the life and ministry of the A/G that ethnic minority play currently. While there is considerable anecdotal evidence that progress has been made on these and other action steps toward inclusion of historically underrepresented groups in the mainstream of life and ministry of the A/G, there is considerable progress yet to be made.

Several crucial documents are offered as historical reminders of the efforts and struggles for racial inclusion within the Assemblies of God. The first is a meticulous chronology of the decades preceding and during the Robert Harrison ordination case. The research by Dr. Lois Olena is sobering. *A predominantly Anglo constituency may wonder out loud why action needs to be taken beyond a cordial welcome for people of color to enter into fullest life and ministry of the Assemblies of God. There are historical barriers that exist and are not easily removed. Dr. Lois Olena chronicles the struggle for inclusion by people of color in the Assemblies of God. Her work documents the era previous to the Robert Harrison ordination. Her careful documentation shows a painful process, as leadership wrestle with racial inclusion. Dr. Olena’s work is not included to cast stones. We only need remember it will be all our experience to be evaluated by*

subsequent generations and our actions are what we will be accountable for. But one cannot read the chronology Dr. Olena's research provides without some rather haunting self-reflection as to how each of us might have responded if we were living in that era.

In addition, a transcript of the December 1969 meeting called by General Superintendent Zimmerman is offered as a mirror of genuine effort toward reconciliation during the Civil Rights movement era. Finally, actions taken at the General Council level since 1989 are documented to demonstrate the action steps the Assemblies of God has taken toward racial reconciliation.

Harrison's Context: AG Racial Dilemma Throughout the Forties, Fifties, and Early Sixties

Year	Brown: General Council; Blue: General Presbytery; Purple: AG Minister or Church; Black: Outside Inquiry; Red: AG Executive; Green: Executive Presbytery
1943	GC Resolution (“to promote <u>missionary activity</u> among our American colored people”). The matter was <u>referred to the Executive Presbytery</u> “in order not to tie the hands of the brethren by a binding resolution.”
1945	A resolution was offered encouraging the “establishment of Assembly of God churches for the colored race and that when such churches are established they be authorized to display the name, ‘Assembly of God—Colored Branch.’” General Superintendent E. S. Williams introduced Bruce Gibson, an African-American ordained by the AG in '33, who left the AG (on good terms) in '37, and was reinstated in '52, to speak on the General Council floor in favor of this resolution. The resolution was <u>adopted</u> .
1946	GP goes on record as “favoring the establishment of a colored Pentecostal Church altogether separate and apart from the General Council of the Assemblies of God.”
1947	Resolution was again offered to establish a Colored Branch since requests were coming in from the black community for help. Moved that a <u>committee</u> of “brethren from the North and the South be appointed...to give thorough study to this problem” and <u>report back</u> at the 1949 General Council. (This issue was never attended to at the 1949 Council.)
1951	Robert Harrison is denied a ministerial license with the Assemblies of God.
1952	Bruce Gibson is reinstated with the Assemblies of God.
1953 Aug 31	Selina Kirby , a “missionary among colored” in Illinois, writes a letter to Gayle Lewis that upon inquiring as to the possibility of the AG mothering a church among “some of our needy colored sections of Chicago,” she was told that the AG “voted it out some time ago as our Southern Whites still have nothing to do with them!” She remarks as to the “unchristian attitude” this portrays and reminds Lewis there is “no race discrimination with God.” She accuses the AG of being “worse than the world” in this matter and asks Lewis to have the people “pray about this and ask God to take this hatred out of their hearts.” She is baffled as to “how any Christian can feel this way, especially Pentecostal people!” She points out that Wheaton and Moody have now allowed black men and women, and that “God has blessed them in it” and that they had gone on to be fine ministers, “winning their own people to the Lord.”
1953 Sep 24	Ralph Riggs responds to Selina Kirby's letter to Bro. Lewis. “You have placed before us a <u>very serious and important question</u> . If it is the Lord's will for us to consider this matter in the near future, I assure you that we shall be happy to do so. I agree heartily with you that our colored brethren are dear to the heart of God and need the gospel as well as everybody else. The only matter which is in doubt is <u>how we can best discharge our responsibility toward them</u> . Will you please pray that the Lord will give us special wisdom and His divine grace in handling this important question.”
1955	GP records on the “Colored Question” are <u>expunged from the record</u> .
1956	Ruling that granting of a license to preach was a district function. Districts could license blacks if they so chose to. However, still blacks could not be ordained by the General Council.
1957	Robert Harrison is licensed.
1957 mid-yr	“Segregation Versus Integration” document is prepared by Grady L. Fannin, Chairman; Jesse Smith, Lowell Ashbrook, and W. R. Williamson and submitted to the General Presbytery . Discussed the complexity of the problem, affirmed AG neglect and inequities as well as means

	to address those. But also conveyed concerns that integration was <u>inadvisable</u> due to larger societal issues. The GP accepted the document's recommendations.
1957	The EP prepared an "Integration Statement," that "matters of procedure along these lines are <u>left to local determination</u> and are <u>not established by organizational action.</u> "
1957 Sep?	Evangelist Robert N. Stewart of Newburgh, NY, writes to Ralph Riggs asking, "Will you kindly let me know if you are <u>receiving colored ministers into your fellowship?</u> " Robert was not interested in COGIC, he says, because he was saved in an AG Church and is a Bible College graduate.
1957 Sep 24	Ralph Riggs responds to Brother Stewart, "Greetings in the name of our Lord! In answer to your letter of recent date asking if we receive colored ministers into our fellowship, I can advise you that our districts are <u>left to operate on their own discretion</u> in this matter. Our friends of the <u>northern states do not find any difficulty here</u> , at least to have such brethren to serve as <u>licensed</u> ministers." He recommends that Bro. Stewart make application to Rev. Joseph Flower of the NY District if interested.
1957 Oct 3	The Home Missions Department sends out a letter to several mainline denominations regarding the question of what their denomination is doing "among the negroes. We are especially interested in determining the organic relationship of the negro work to your denomination. Is it a <u>branch</u> or is it an <u>integral part</u> of your organization? What services and assistance do you offer to them? What are your plans for the future of this work?" (Summary of the survey findings comes out in May, 1958.)
1957 Nov 12 EP	EP addresses the "question of the advisability of receiving congregations of colored people into the fellowship and the ordination of colored ministers." The question was raised by way of a letter from Joseph Gerhart, Secretary of the Northern California-Nevada District. The EP votes to <u>refer the question to the GP</u> and to write to Gerhart that "a decision <u>must be deferred</u> for clarification by the General Presbytery."
1958 Jan 9 EP	EP considers plea from Northern California-Nevada District to recognize a church "consisting of colored people." "The motion was made that in view of the fact that <u>we have never been asked</u> to accept a colored congregation in the fellowship of the Assemblies of God that this question of acceptance <u>be referred</u> to the General Presbytery for a decision. The motion was seconded and passed."
1958 Feb 9	Joseph Gerhart, Secretary of the Northern California District writes Riggs asking for a copy of the "General Presbytery report on the racial situation." [i.e., The "Segregation and Integration" report].
1958 Feb 11	Ralph Riggs writes to Leonard Palmer, Supt. of the N. Cal-Nev. District regarding Gerhart's request and points out the GP desire to keep the report confidential. However, he gives him permission to make sufficient copies for his own presbytery board. He notes, "Brother Flower feels that we should remember <u>in accepting people into our churches on the integration pattern we would probably discourage white people attending our meetings</u> . This would cause us to develop into a <u>colored work exclusively</u> . This is a possibility which the <u>General Presbyters pointed out in their report</u> ." He deems the matter "certainly worthy of further discussion" and looks forward to doing so in their September meeting.
1958 Apr 18	Charlotte Lewis of Tuskegee Institute writes Ralph Riggs asking the AG to participate in a survey regarding the "role of the church in desegregation." She asks for official statements of church policy, inquires as to the extent of racial integration within the churches, and asks for information on any actions taken "to encourage or discourage desegregation in the community."
1958 Apr 23	J. Roswell Flower quickly responds to Charlotte Lewis on behalf of Ralph Riggs, who is

	<p>away. He says, "We appreciate your inquiry pertaining to the role of the church in desegregation, but we are afraid that we cannot give you very much information of any value to your study. The Assemblies of God is a vigorous missionary and evangelistic association which <u>has not concerned itself with social and racial problems</u>. <u>No actions</u> of any nature have been taken <u>to encourage or discourage desegregation</u> in any community or the country as a whole. There are a <u>few ordained ministers</u> of the colored race in the Assemblies of God and some of our churches, particularly in the northern states, do have <u>members</u> of the colored race. That is about the <u>extent of the church's participation</u> in desegregation."</p>
1958 May 19	<p>R. L. Brandt (National Home Missions Secretary) presents a summary of the survey sent to Mainline denominations regarding their work "among negroes" (sent out October 3, 1957).</p>
1958 Sep 3-5	<p>Leonard Palmer, Supt. Of N-Cal-Nev. District "reported on a problem which he said had developed in his district regarding the receiving of a colored church into membership and of ordaining a colored person who had applied for ordination." This had come before the EP but <u>they had requested the GP decide on it</u>. Much discussion followed. Wide difference of opinion. "Finally, in deference to certain extenuating circumstances, and in the absence of a unanimity of opinion regarding the matter" it was decided that consideration of the problem be <u>postponed</u> to see whether establishing a Colored Fellowship was advisable.</p>
1958 Nov 22	<p>Gayle F. Lewis, Exec. Director of Home Missions writes to G. Raymond Carlson (then in Minneapolis) in response to Carlson's October 29 inquiry relative to a <u>colored fellowship</u>. Apparently Carlson had written Lewis previously about a certain <u>black "Brother in Minnesota" interested in affiliating in some way with the AG</u>. Lewis says <u>the matter is a "pretty delicate one at the present time."</u> In spite of the fact that they seemed "almost at a stalemate" for a time, Lewis expresses assurance the "<u>God will help us</u> in this matter." He mentions the provision for an appointment of a <u>committee</u> to study the problem but notes <u>no action on that as yet</u>. He seriously <u>questions how far they will get</u> on the proposed basis and notes he believes "<u>our colored friends will desire a closer relationship.</u>" He expresses <u>support for the idea of a colored branch</u> and notes the past General Council proposals and approval for such. He notes in the past there were only two "colored ministers" at the time interested in the AG, both of whom refused to go along with the branch idea. After a more recent meeting involving a day's discussion, the brethren had "agreed to the forming of a colored branch if that should be approved by the General Council." Their work in such would be along the lines of other language groups within Home Missions. Lewis plans to present this matter to the Executives and asks Carlson to "hold steady for just a little bit."</p> <p>Lewis notes that a colored branch "<u>would be a compromise between what the brethren have in mind now which is simply fellowship without organic relationship and complete integration</u>. I told the brethren in Northern California if they were interested in helping their <u>race, a branch would do the job</u> but if they were <u>just simply seeking membership in connection with integration with the white we were not interested</u>. I may be wrong in my thinking on this but I fear <u>motive has a great deal to do with our approach to this subject and how it will be received in our movement</u> as a whole."</p> <p>He concludes asking Carlson to pray that "God will help us to find the right solution to this delicate problem which confronts our entire Nation in this hour."</p>
1958 Dec 10	<p>Letter [from Ralph Riggs? – not noted] to Leonard Palmer regarding committee for the consideration of establishing a Colored Fellowship. Meeting is set to convene January 21 and 22, 1959. Refers to it as a "<u>very delicate as well as important matter</u>" and asks for prayer that God will provide wisdom and revelation.</p>
1959 Feb 22	<p>Committee to Consider a Colored Fellowship convenes at CBI. History of proposals is reviewed, report is prepared with the <u>recommendations to establish a Colored Fellowship</u> under supervision of Home Missions to promote <u>evangelism, a basis of fellowship for ministers and churches, training</u> of ministers, establishing of <u>churches</u>, and to provide GC <u>resources</u>. Further recommendation includes the appointment of a <u>Credentials Committee for the Negro</u></p>

	<u>Fellowship. This report was tabled.</u>
1959 June?	NJ District Council passes a resolution “inviting Negroes to join the church, and, if they wish, to enter the ministry.” The District goes on record as the first AG Council to pass this type of resolution.
1959 Aug 20 EP	EP committee reports on Colored Fellowship. “The Presbytery was made conscious of the <u>delicate situation</u> now existing and the <u>need of great care</u> in the wording of the report.”
1959 Aug 24-25	GP considers “Report of the Committee to Consider a <u>Colored Fellowship</u> ” which had been appointed to the committee in the September 1958 GP meeting. Report received “considerable discussion concerning the <u>advisability of forming such a fellowship</u> , and the possibility expressed we might become involved in the present agitation regarding racial problems prevalent in society at large.” It was resolved and “unanimously adopted” that the committee “ <u>lay the report on the table</u> .” The report and the matter itself were to receive “ <u>absolutely no publicity</u> ” and considered <u>confidential</u> for the GP alone.
1959? 1960?	<p>A note is added on to the end of a summary document of official actions taken with respect to the “Colored” question: “<u>In spite of the foregoing</u> [summary of actions] some of the <u>northern districts have ordained colored ministers for years</u>. They <u>have not made an issue out of it</u>, but have <u>quietly ordained</u> those who have applied and who have met basic requirements for ordination. This is particularly true in the <u>New York District</u> and, I understand, in the <u>Northwest</u>. So far <u>no problem has developed</u> with this procedure. There is really <u>nothing in the General Council constitution and bylaws prohibiting the ordination of Negro ministers</u>, and such applications have been <u>honored by the General Secretary’s office in the past</u>, when they have been duly processed and recommended by the District Credentials Committee.”</p> <p>NOTE: A handwritten note on the AG Archive summary document indicates the above quoted paragraph was probably added by J. Roswell Flower. But Howard Kenyon [“Black Ministers in the Assemblies of God,” (p. 20, n. 14)] attributes this same paragraph to Thomas F. Zimmerman. Kenyon says the paragraph came from a November 4, 1960 letter to Joseph Gerhart. However, Zimmerman’s letter to Gerhart in response to Gerhart’s November 2 letter appealing on behalf of Harrison for ordination is dated November 9, 1960 (not November 4), and this paragraph does not exist in the November 9 letter. (See below for November 9 letter).</p>
1960 Nov 2	<p>Joseph Gerhart writes Zimmerman (first an undated handwritten note probably from around the same time and then) a letter stating, “It is with much hesitation that I write you but time makes it necessary for us to have a decision in regard to one of our <u>young ministers who is making application for ordination</u>. You may recall that during the General Presbyters meeting in Springfield in 1958, Robert E. <u>Harrison</u>, a young colored man who has been licensed with this District for many years [three], was mentioned in the discussion concerning <u>ordination of colored applicants</u>. Brother Harrison is applying for ordination in this District at this time and there is no question whatsoever about his qualifications and ability except for the position taken by the General Presbytery. We need to hear from you as soon as possible as to what action we should take at this time.”</p> <p>Gerhart’s (earlier?) handwritten note says, “Thom: I am greatly distressed over this <u>ordination problem</u>. I have reason to believe that one of my brethren is responsible for Bob’s coming to us at this time—just prior to election time. My concern is not the election but the issue itself—which is <u>shall we start ordaining our good colored brethren</u>. I need an <i>official ruling</i> [his emphasis] on this matter as early as possible. I really regret having to burden you with this knowing of your condition but if you can help me please do. Love –Joe”</p>
1960 Nov 9	Zimmerman’s November 9 response to Gerhart’s appeal is: “I have given considerable thought to the matter referred to in your correspondence <u>relative to the ordination of the colored minister</u> [Harrison]. I have carefully reviewed the actions taken by the General Presbytery and, frankly, <u>I feel somewhat indefinite</u> as to what specific word to give you. I feel there is <u>wisdom in presenting this matter for the consideration of the Full Executive Presbytery</u> which will be convening here November 29 to December 1. I am sorry to <u>delay in giving you a</u>

	<u>definite reply</u> , but I feel in a <u>matter of this importance</u> we would do well to get the consensus of the full Board. You may expect to hear further regarding your request immediately following this meeting.”
1960 Dec 18	Zimmerman’s memo to Bartlett Peterson (Gen. Sec.) regarding a call he’d received from Gerhart asking that Harrison’s case be referred for full EP consideration in February. He notes Gerhart feels it is “quite a <u>controversial issue</u> ” that “would probably be best for all concerned if the matter would finally be referred to the Ministerial Relations Committee of our next General Presbyters session for guidance and decision.” Zimmerman says it will be <u>referred</u> to the next “full Executive Presbyters meeting” and asks Bartlett to hold off writing a letter of decision to Gerhart regarding the matter.
1960 Dec 19	Bartlett Peterson’s December 19 letter to Gerhart was not mailed. He states that the EP had adopted that the N. California-Nevada District be “informed that after studying the record on this subject, there is <u>no apparent firm decision on this matter</u> and therefore we rule that the <u>District should take whatever steps it may regard as proper</u> in connection with the application.” He goes on to state, however, that “The above action...is <u>not intended to mean in any manner that this body is encouraging the ordination of a colored applicant</u> . I am sure, however, that you will recognize that the Executive Presbytery faces a problem inasmuch as the General Presbytery has <u>never been able to solve this matter</u> .”
1961 Aug 21-22	GP considers “Case Number Four” involving the “granting of ministerial credentials [i.e., ordination, as Harrison already was licensed at this point] to a certain Robert E. Harrison in the Northern California-Nevada District. It was reported that ‘It is the opinion of the committee that the <u>District Councils are at liberty to ordain any person they feel to be qualified</u> . Should the Executive Presbytery refuse to grant credentials, the District then has the right to appeal to the General Presbytery.’”
1961 Feb 24	Bartlett Peterson writes Gerhart that his correspondence “relative to the possibility of ordination for a candidate who is colored has been laid before the Executive Presbytery in today’s meeting. After consideration of the matter, the Executive Presbytery has adopted a motion to <u>refer the question</u> to the <u>Ministerial Relations Committee</u> for consideration in their next meeting.”
1961 Jun 30	Bartlett Peterson writes R. J. Carlson, Supt. of the NW District (due to his involvement with the ministerial relations committee). He explains the history of the application (that the EP, in light of decisions by the GP, had laid the matter before the ministerial relations committee). He rehearses Gerhart’s letter to Zimmerman and also adds, “Attention should be called to the fact that further correspondence from Brother Gerhart indicates that the <u>ordination of this colored brother would pose some real problems within the district</u> .” He closes by requesting for prayer that God would “grant guidance in this <u>very difficult problem</u> .”
1962	Robert Harrison is ordained.

Lois E. Olena, “From Paralysis to Action: Robert Harrison and the Assemblies of God” Paper submitted to Dr. Grant Wacker for History and Future of American Pentecostalism class at AGTS, D.Min Department, April 2006.

Ways and Means of Reaching the Black Community

December 1969

The reference to the December 1969 conference on the Ways and Means of Reaching the Black Community is a mirror to all of us nearly 37 years after that event. What progress has been made since 1969 to achieve the simple recommendations of this group? Again, we cannot demand from the past something it is incapable of yielding, but we are accountable for today. What lessons can we learn? What actions must we hasten to participate in?

Conference With Blacks

December 15, 1969

7:00 p.m.

The meeting opened at 7:00 p.m. following a fellowship dinner. Seven Negro brethren and one lady met with the members of the resident Executive Presbytery. They are:

Robert Harrison
Ralph H. Houston
Miss Louise Whittingham
Donald Green
Thurman L. Faison
George M. Perry
Wendell H. Wallace
Douglas S. Bass

Brother Zimmerman extended a welcome to each and encouraged participation in discussion. He offered a statement of purpose for the meeting and indicated the desire of the Assemblies of God to contribute in a meaningful way toward the reaching of the inner city people. He solicited the help of our guests and asked for suggestions. He stated that we have avoided, and continue to desire to avoid any effort which might be competitive with the Church of God in Christ. At the same time we feel our responsibility to reach people of all walks of life and all colors.

Brother Zimmerman suggested a season of prayer to seek God's guidance. Prayer was offered by a number. Following this discussion began with questions and answers relative to work in the inner city and the plan of the Assemblies of God.

Some of the suggestions offered are recorded below:

- The problem is to find qualified leadership material among the blacks to serve in churches, and to become ministers in preparation as students.
- Manhattan is a whole mission field which is an untapped area.
- Need to help people to become involved with their own areas.

- Our colleges should get involved in black communities. Central Bible College should get involved in an extension division in black areas.
- It was stated that Biola is sending large groups into Watts to do personal work, to hold meetings and to distribute literature. They are also offering a Head Start program.
- A whole new dimension of Evangelism is needed...the making of the gospel relevant...doing two things...ministering to the soul and the body. Jesus did it by giving the word of life and feeding the multitude. Harlem needs a good Christian school.
- With the move to suburbia by whites, many blacks of the higher class also move along to suburbia. These feel unwelcome and uncomfortable so do not attend church. The churches are not prepared to reach or welcome them so they are lost.
- Suggest an article in *Advance* by a qualified black on how to do the job—how to reach the blacks.
- Avoid a paternalistic attitude but show a genuineness in desiring to reach and help the blacks. Blacks have been conditioned to detect a lack of a genuine attitude toward them.
- A white church "mothering" a church in a black area.
- A Teen Challenge center to reach the blacks
- Seminars in our colleges and Districts to acquaint our people with how to understand the black man and how to work with him.

Recessed 10:30 p.m. to reconvene Tuesday 9:00 a.m.

Prayer: all joined hands and prayed in unison

**December 16, 1969 9:00 a.m.
Conference with Black Brethren continued.**

Brother Bass arrived at this point.

The meeting opened with Scripture as quoted and read by each person present. Prayer was offered by Brother Houston.

It was suggested that emphasis be given to the fact that whites can effectively win blacks. It is not true that it takes a black to win blacks.

It was suggested by George Perry that we determine what we can do together with blacks to help them which will not be paternalistic but will help the black to help himself and thus beget his confidence.

An overview was given by Brother Zimmerman of what we are currently doing among blacks and activities which are scheduled for the near future.

Brother Scott reported on the scope of Teen Challenge including the work of CURE. He stated that these programs reach into black communities.

Brother Faison stated that the group of blacks had a caucus last night and desires to present some recommendations which resulted.

He suggested the need for Districts becoming involved to the extent of purchasing and providing churches to be staffed by black pastors. He said that if each District did this immediately we would have 47 new churches.

Brother Harrison inquired if we now have enough available blacks to pastor these churches. The question was raised if our colleges are training blacks for the ministry. It was stated that black students are currently enrolled in a number of our colleges.

Speaking of his experience in Portland, Brother Bass suggested establishment of youth centers and a black related church.

Brother Faison introduced the idea of sending black ministers from America to African countries for special ministry as well as for missionary service. All of the guests spoke in favor of this.

Recessed 12:20 to reconvene 1:30 p.m. Prayer: Brother Faison

Tuesday, 1:45 p.m.

Brother Zimmerman expressed a desire to enumerate various areas which relate to this ministry in an attempt to construct usable suggestions.

The following were offered:

George Perry:

1. Appoint a committee to study feasibility of anything presented here. Said committee also to study the black community with a report to be made to the General Presbytery.
2. Study educational needs for New York especially Harlem. Christian schools were referred to here. This includes responsibility of the above committee to study possible development of the property in Harlem now owned by the New York District.
3. Developing continued ministry in black areas and orient whites as well as blacks by ministers' seminars.
4. He (George Perry) offered a bibliography of books which would be beneficial in considering the mutual problem. He agreed to make copies and mail to each present.

Bob Harrison:

- Using some ministry writers for our literature. Use such to develop special literature for blacks. Concern for integrated literature.

Brother Gannon requested information on availability of qualified Spirit-filled writers.

Wendell Wallace:

- Employment of a black minister as an evangelist who could start new churches and remain until church is established. He would be a national evangelist, would do liaison work, conduct ministers' seminars, etc.

Douglas Bass:

- Produce record of successes by workers among blacks. A desire was expressed to be kept abreast of happenings.

Thurman Faison:

- Each District should select a target area and secure property and perspective ministers.

Wendell Wallace:

- Would the Assemblies of God be willing to support a full time evangelist to the blacks?

Brother Zimmerman stated that we are unable to make decisions of this kind at this sitting but that all suggestions will be carefully weighed by the full Executive Presbytery. He stated that we cannot promise to carry out all suggestions offered but promised that all will receive very careful consideration. He assured them that the fact that all eight of our officers have arranged busy schedules to be present and have also authorized a considerable amount of money to bring our guests here are indications of the seriousness and importance with which we view this meeting.

Harrison:

- That attempts be made to select blacks in various areas of the Headquarters' work for important positions.

Wallace:

- Produce undated literature dealing with black needs and relationships.

Harrison:

- That the church make efforts to make and maintain proper rapport with the black community.

Perry:

- Establish a church relations race council with a black man at Headquarters with whom conference can be held.

Brother Faison stated that such a person would have to be movement oriented in order to give proper guidance as well as to sense the best for the entire movement as well as to insure continued success of attitudes toward the work and relationships with the black work.

Donald Greene:

- Create fellowship between white and black churches in the community.

Wallace:

- Use of some black ministers in African conventions, etc.

Carlson:

- Consider employment of a qualified black member of the faculty of the Bible college.

Perry:

- Readjustment of policies and priorities with respect to money. Full scholarships for blacks through our Bible colleges. His reference to readjustment related also to the area of helping applicants qualify for entrance in our Bible colleges. Considerable time was spent on the need for remedial education.

Whittingham:

- Convey information that black boys and girls are and can be included in Royal Rangers and Prims.

Perry:

- Plan extension divisions of our colleges to include blacks.

Zimmerman:

- Need of black literature similar to that produced by the American Tract Society for blacks.
- Brother Zimmerman stated that there will be varying degrees of timing as to participation by various districts. He plead that an isolated disappointing case not be the basis upon which we judge progress.

Harrison:

- Recordings by black artists.

Perry:

- Reconsider and rewrite statement of social concern. Use some blacks on rewrite committee.

(Brother Zimmerman requested him to write us re: areas of the statement he feels are reactionary to present conditions and to offer suggested wording.)

Greene:

- Proper presentation to blacks and black community—non-condescending.
- Black and white teamwork in evangelism and opening of new churches.

Wallace:

- An exchange of members on short-term basis between churches so that these may observe and broaden understanding.

Adjourned 4:00 p.m.

Prayer: Brother Zimmerman

Recorded by
Bartlett Peterson

(Transcript of the original document.)

A summary of recommended actions of this conference would include the following:

- White church mothering a church in an black area
- Seminars in our colleges and districts to acquaint our people with how to understand the black man and how to work with him
- Suggested the need for District becoming involved to the extent of purchasing and providing churches to be staffed by black pastors
- Sending of black ministers from America to African countries for special ministry as well as for missionary service
- District selecting target areas and securing property and prospective ministries.

General Council Action on Issues of Race and Ethnicity Since 1989

General Council—1989

Resolution 20, Racism

WHEREAS, Racism is an issue that continues to confront the church and American society today; and

WHEREAS, Racism continues to confront our brothers and sisters in other countries; and

WHEREAS, The Bible recognizes that all people are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27; 5:1,2); and

WHEREAS, The Bible declares that the barriers that separate us from one another have been broken down through Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26-28), Colossians 3:11); and

WHEREAS, In the Early Church the Holy Spirit confronted divisions along racial lines and brought reconciliation (Acts 6:1-7, 10:1-22); therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Assemblies of God oppose the sin of racism in any form; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call any and all to repentance who have participated in the sin of racism through personal thought or action, or through church and social structures, or through inactivity in addressing racism as individuals or as a church; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we pray for God to give us the courage to confront the sin of racism where it may be found in our own lives, in our churches, in our society structures, and in our world; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we participate with the work of the Holy Spirit in actively working against racism at home and abroad, and that we seek the reconciliation of man to God and man to man.

Resolution 31
Cooperative Relationship Between Foreign
Language and Geographical Districts

WHEREAS, The Assemblies of God is blessed with dynamically growing foreign language districts; and

WHEREAS, Foreign language groups share the same geographical area as geographical districts; and

WHEREAS, Present bylaw provisions related to cooperation and communication between foreign language and geographical districts could be strengthened to more clearly delineate the responsibilities of said districts to one another; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That bylaws Article V, Section 4, c and d, be amended as follows:

Article V. District Councils

Section 4. Foreign Language Districts

- c. Cooperative relationship. Both the foreign language district and the geographical district shall seek to promote a spirit of fellowship and cooperation. The foreign language district officers and the geographical district officers should inform and/or consult together concerning the opening of new foreign language works or institutions of any kind, in a given area. The foreign language churches, whether members of a geographical or foreign language district, are encouraged to unite where possible, in fellowship activities.
- d. Sponsorship and affiliation of a foreign language group. Should an English-speaking church desire to initiate sponsorship of a foreign language group, it shall consult with its district officials for counsel and guidance. The geographical district should inform and/or consult with foreign language district officers concerning the beginning of a foreign language group within churches belonging to the geographical district. The sponsoring church may provide facilities and/or support to such a work through its district home missions department. Such an effort may be initiated with the objective in mind that it will develop into an Assemblies of God church. When such a church reaches as many as 20 adult foreign language members, it may then seek affiliation with a district of its choice following prescribed guidelines as outlines in these by-laws.

General Council—1991

Resolution 1 Intercultural Ministries Department Representatives

National representatives for both Black Ministry and Native American ministry are added to serve with Intercultural Ministries Department.

General Council—1995

Resolution 25 Revised. Use of Black Ministers

A revised version of resolution 25 read as follows:

WHEREAS, The gospel of Jesus Christ declares God so loved the world he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life; and

WHEREAS, The scriptures have promised that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh; and

WHEREAS, The world for whom Jesus died and the flesh upon which the Spirit is poured out is without regard to ethnicity, class, economic distinction, or gender; and

WHEREAS, The foremost exemplary model of Pentecostal community in the 20th century is the Azusa Revival where leadership and people joined together without regard to ethnicity, providing a divine rebuke against the Jim Crow laws and racial discrimination of this worldly age and throwing a shining light of God's intention for His church where the blood of Christ washes out the color line; and

WHEREAS, Because of the deep stain and sin of racism following the Azusa revival, predominately black and white Pentecostal denominations went their separate ways for a season; and

WHEREAS, The Assemblies of God was established during that time of separation so that our Fellowship became one form which black persons were mostly absent; and

WHEREAS, Our testimony to the world has suffered as a result of this separation and our Fellowship has been deprived of the rich blessings which could have been made by our black brothers and sisters; and

WHEREAS, In the goodness of the Lord and in the fullness of time, the Holy spirit prompted us as a body in our 1989 General Council to repent of and denounce racism as a sin; and

WHEREAS, Across this Fellowship, congregations are opening their hearts to become multiethnic communities which bear witness to Jesus Christ who told us that the world will know us by our love for one another; and

WHEREAS, It is right that we repent of racism and ask our black brothers and sisters for forgiveness for failing to keep and treasure the singing ideal of Jesus and the 20th century Azusa revival; and

WHEREAS, We are committed to removing every last vestige of racism from our midst and restoring to the work of the Lord the blessing of an integrated Fellowship; and

WHEREAS, Toward this end, we encourage from our hearts the full participation of black persons within the Assemblies of God in fellowship and leadership; and

WHEREAS, Action by this General Council is needed to give impetus to our districts, ministers, and people for the full inclusion of black brothers and sisters throughout our Fellowship; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this General Council ask the general superintendent and Board of Administration, the executive and general presbyteries, the executive officers and presbyteries of districts, pastors and ministers, local church boards and congregations to take whatever actions are necessary or advisable to enhance and accelerate the progress being made in our Fellowship for the inclusion of black brothers and sisters throughout every aspect of the Assemblies of God; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Council request the general superintendent to issue a public statement speaking to the spirit of this resolution before the Council adjourns.

The motion to adopt Resolution 25 Revised carried.

There was a time of discussion concerning the possibility of adding a black representative on the Executive Presbytery. The chairman stated that could be done only through an amendment to the Constitution. In fulfillment of the request made in Resolution 25 Revised, the general superintendent made the following comments:

General Superintendent's Statement

“This 46th General Council has adopted a resolution calling upon our Fellowship to enhance and accelerate efforts toward inclusiveness of our black brothers and sisters throughout the General Council. I pledge that, with the spirit's enablement, I will do all within my power to fulfill what this General Council has called for. I support this action with all my heart.”

He further explained that the General Presbytery has approved the appointment of a committee to study how we can bring about representation of what this Fellowship really is to the level of the General Presbytery and the Executive Presbytery.

It was requested that a copy of the resolution and the statement be included in the quarterly letter so pastors could read it to congregations.

General Council—1997

Ethnic Representation on Executive Presbytery and General Presbytery

WHEREAS, The 1995 General Presbytery authorized the general superintendent to appoint a committee to study what changes would be advisable in the composition of the General Presbytery and Executive Presbyter so as to more accurately reflect the composition in language and culture of our Fellowship itself; and

WHEREAS, The finding and recommendations of this committee were to be made to the 1996 General Presbytery; and

WHEREAS, The committee appointed by the general superintendent has completed its study with findings and recommendations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That Constitution Article IX. Officers, Section 2, paragraph a (page 111), which now reads:

Section 2. Executive Presbytery

- a. **Composition and terms of office.** The Executive Presbytery shall consist of the general superintendent, the assistant general superintendent, the general secretary, the general treasurer, the executive director of the Division of Foreign Missions, the executive director of the Division of home Missions, together with nine other brethren to be chosen from the active Fellowship to bring the number to 15. The terms of office for all members of the Executive Presbytery, except as stated in Section 1, shall continue for 2 years or until their successors qualify.

Be amended to read:

- a) Composition and terms of office. The Executive Presbytery shall consist of the general superintendent, the assistant general superintendent, the general secretary, the general treasurer, the executive director of the Division of Foreign Missions, the executive director of the Division of Home Missions, together with 11 other ordained ministers to be chosen from the active Fellowship to bring the number to 17. The terms of office for all members of the Executive Presbytery,

except as stated in Section 1, shall continue for 2 years or until their successors qualify.

And, be it further

RESOLVED, That the General Council Bylaws Article @@, Section 2, paragraph e (page 12), which now reads:

e) Nonresident executive presbyters.

- 1) Nominations and elections. The General Council shall have the right to elect additional officers to serve on the Executive Presbytery as provided in Article IX, Section 2, of the Constitution. The nominations for nine non resident executive presbyters shall be made as follows: Each district council at its annual meeting prior to the General Council session shall nominate two ministers from its district, one of whom is not an elected full-time district official, to be presented to the General Council as nominees from its area. These nominees shall be presented to and be balloted upon by the General Council in session. A two-thirds vote shall be required to nominate and to elect.
- 2) Area divisions for electing nonresident executive presbyters. For the purpose of electing nonresident executive presbyters, The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall be divided into nine areas, according to district boundary lines in the following manner:

Northwest Area: Alaska, Montana, Northwest, Oregon, Southern Idaho, Wyoming.

Southwest Area: Arizona, Hawaii, Northern California-Nevada, Rocky Mountain, Southern California

North Central Area: Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Northern Missouri, South Dakota, Wisconsin-Northern Michigan

South Central Area: Kansas, New Mexico, North Texas, Oklahoma, South Texas, West Texas

Great Lakes Area: Appalachian, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio

Gulf Area: Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Southern Missouri, Tennessee

Northeast Area: New Jersey, New York, Northern New England, Pennsylvania-Delaware, Potomac, Southern New England

Southeast Area: Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Peninsular Florida, South Carolina, West Florida

Language Area: Central Latin American, German, Gulf Latin American, Korean, Midwest Latin American, Pacific Latin American, Puerto Rico, Southeastern Spanish, Spanish Eastern.

Be amended to read:

e. Non resident executive presbyters.

1) *Nominations and elections.* The General Council shall have the right to elect additional officers to serve on the Executive Presbytery as provided in Article IX, Section 2, of the Constitution.

a. *By area.* The nominations for 10 area nonresident executive presbyters shall be made as follows: Each district council at its annual meeting prior to the General Council session shall nominate two ministers from its district, one of who is not an elected full-time district official, to be presented to the General Council as nominees from its area. These nominees shall be presented to and be balloted upon by the General Council in session. A two-thirds vote shall be required to nominate and to elect.

b. *By ethnic fellowship.* The nomination for one ethnic fellowship nonresident executive presbyter shall be made as follows: Each general presbyter from an ethnic fellowship, serving in the year General Council meets, shall be presented to the General Council as a nominee from the respective ethnic fellowships. These nominees shall be presented to and be balloted upon by the General Council in session. A two-thirds vote shall be required to nominate and elect.

2) *Divisions for electing nonresident executive presbyters.*

a. *By area.* For the purpose of electing nonresident executive presbyters, The General Council of the Assemblies of God shall be divided into 10 areas, according to district boundary lines in the following manner:

Northwest Area: Alaska, Montana, Northwest, Oregon, Southern Idaho, Wyoming.

Southwest Area: Arizona, Hawaii, Northern California-Nevada, Rocky Mountain, Southern California

North Central Area: Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Northern Missouri, South Dakota, Wisconsin-Northern Michigan

South Central Area: Kansas, New Mexico, North Texas, Oklahoma, South Texas, West Texas

Great Lakes Area: Appalachian, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio

Gulf Area: Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Southern Missouri, Tennessee

Northeast Area: New Jersey, New York, Northern New England, Pennsylvania-Delaware, Potomac, Southern New England

Southeast Area: Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Peninsular Florida, South Carolina, West Florida

Language Area—Spanish: Central Latin American, Gulf Latin American, Midwest Latin American, Pacific Latin American, Puerto Rico, Southeastern Spanish, Spanish Eastern

Language Area—other: German, Korean

- b. **By ethnic fellowship.** For the purpose of electing an ethnic fellowship nonresident executive presbyter, only those ethnic fellowships duly recognized (Article V, Section 6) shall be represented.

Resolution 22 National Commission on Ethnicity

WHEREAS, The ethnic population continues to grow both in our society and in our Fellowship, and

WHEREAS, The Assemblies of God ethnic constituency has become a major component now representative of 25; and

WHEREAS, We, the Assemblies of God have dealt seriously with the issue of becoming a multicultural, multiethnic church in America; and

WHEREAS, We need to address the issue of including appropriate ethnic minority representation at leadership and ministry development levels of this organization; and

WHEREAS, The Assemblies of God's commitment to the Great Commission demands our response to the challenges of the multiethnic, multi-cultural realities of America and as stewards of the manifold grace of God to the development of ministry to the growing and diverse population of our society, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That an amendment be made to Bylaws Article XI. General Superintendent's Office (page 164) through the addition of a new Section 5 which shall read:

Section 5. Commission on Ethnicity

- a) Sphere of authority. There shall be a Commission of Ethnicity which shall have oversight of a national ethnic agenda for the Assemblies of God.
- b) Purpose. The purpose of the commission is to fulfill the Great Commission which mandates seeking to fulfill the threefold mission of the Assemblies of God through:
 - 1) Providing a forum for listening and understanding the ethnic issues that relate to our Fellowship;
 - 2) Giving direction to formulate, establish, and communicate a vision of the ethnic opportunities for ministry.

- 3) Recommending organizational changes that will facilitate effective ministry to ethnic constituents and enhance the participation of these within the Fellowship.

General Council—1999

Resolution 9. Ethnic Representation

WHEREAS, The 1997 General Council adopted Resolution 3 (Ethnic Representation on Executive Presbyter and General Presbytery); and

WHEREAS, The annual election of the representative would place an undue hardship upon the fellowships by mandating an annual business meeting with an election and thereby virtually eliminating the hop of regional or geographic fellowship meetings, which would meet in the off year as an effort to strengthen the fellowships' support base; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That General Council Bylaws Article II, Section 2, paragraph f (page 122, which now reads:

- 5) Ethnic fellowship representative. Ethnic fellowship representatives, as provided for in the Constitution Article IX, Section 3, paragraph d., shall be elected annually by their respective ethnic fellowships. A two-thirds vote shall be required. They shall take office immediately upon election.

Be amended to read:

- 5) Ethnic fellowship representatives. Ethnic fellowship representatives, as provided for in Constitution Article IX, Section 3, paragraph d, shall be elected biennially by their respective ethnic fellowship. A two-thirds vote shall be required. They shall take office immediately upon election.

General Council—2003

Section 5. Commission on Ethnicity

Section 5. Commission on Ethnicity (Amended)

- e. Composition of Commission on Ethnicity. There shall be a Commission on Ethnicity, which shall consist of the following: The chairperson, co-chairperson, the Board of Administration (ex officio), ethnic executive presbyters (ex officio), and one general presbyter from each ethnic district or

fellowship. Members-at-large shall include but not be limited to representatives from the various Headquarters ministries and ethnic ministers as deemed necessary.

- 1) Selection of commission. Those members of the commission not serving by virtue of office shall be selected as follows: The members off the commission shall be nominated by the Executive Presbytery and elected by the General Presbytery in their annual meeting. Care shall be taken to maximize rotation among the ethnic presbyters.
- 2) Term of office. Those members of the commission not serving by virtue of office shall serve on a rotating basis on a 2-year assignment to allow greater representation from the field. Members may be a appointed for one succeeding term except for those from fellowships entitled to only one general presbyter. The commission chairperson, ex officio members, and Headquarters representatives will have no term limitations.

New Heritage Cathedral Symposium

April 6-7, 2006
Chicago, Illinois

On April 6-7, 2006, AGTS sponsored a symposium hosted at New Heritage Cathedral (A/G) in Chicago, Illinois, pastored by Bishop Ed Peecher. This symposium was the final event in the King-Seymour Leadership Forum, which was an effort by AGTS during the spring of 2006 to bring critical reflection on the relationship between the Pentecostal traditions and racial reconciliation. The King-Seymour Forum was facilitated by a grant received from the Louisville Institute. The Forum's goal was to use the lives of Martin Luther King Jr. and William F. Seymour as lenses through which to understand the religious and social aspects of the church's moral leadership in society. The Forum sought to use the lives of King and Seymour to give opportunity to acknowledge both the wasted opportunities and unexplained potential of the Pentecostal tradition. Nearly 30 participants gathered to discuss, dialogue and recommend ways in which the Assemblies of God could increase full participation in the life and ministry of the Assemblies of God for people of color.

After a day and a half of working together, the participants offered the following recommendations. It is anticipated that these recommendations will follow a process, coordinated by Dr. Jesse Miranda, Commissioner of the Commission on Ethnicity, that will lead to these recommendations being part of a current effort by the Assemblies of God to streamline inclusion of people of color into the life and ministry of the Assemblies of God.

KING-SEYMOUR FORUM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a strategic plan within the A/G Fellowship to promote the inclusion of ethnic minority leaders in all levels of the Fellowship.
2. Encourage and support the identification and promotion of ethnic minority members to meaningful roles in the Church, including leadership positions.
3. Include in the strategic plan growth levels that will allow for an assessment process to facilitate the monitoring of the success in achieving ethnic diversity in the leadership at the congregation, District and national levels.
4. Reflect in the strategic plan an effective way to support the AG endorsed Bible schools, colleges and the seminary in their efforts to recruit, retain, and graduate ethnic minority students. This is essential for placement in ministry and leadership.
5. Develop a program/process to identify, support and encourage ministers, pastors and leaders to recognize the need for the Gospel message to be taken to population centers defined by underrepresented groups.
6. Explain and clarify for the Fellowship the role and responsibility Ethnic Fellowships have in the Assembly of God – their relationship to the congregations, to the District Councils and to the other Church leadership groups.
7. Ensure adequate funding for effective and comprehensive ministries in the Fellowship.
8. Ensure that the EP, GP and BOA make a commitment to increasing the ethnic representation within the leadership to a level that appropriately recognizes that 34 per cent of the AG attendees is ethnic minority. The appointment of leaders for national departments and other significant “professional” roles should be made with this in mind.
9. Ensure that employment at all levels at the Springfield headquarters be integrated to include ethnic minority employees. One goal should be that for each position to be filled at least one qualified underrepresented applicant be interviewed for the position. Headquarters should be a model for other leadership groups and institutions in the Fellowship.
10. Ensure that the approved summary, findings and recommendations from the King-Seymour Forum be widely distributed to the Fellowship.

King-Seymour Participants

Chicago, Illinois

April 2006

Clemente Maldonado

Superintendent Midwest Latin District

Cmaldonaado26@sbcglobal.net

Todd Claire

Secretary, Midwest Latin District

Revtclair@sbcglobal.net

Jean-Claude Duncan

AGTS alum

Air Force Chaplain Candidate

j.duncan@gmx.de

Renea Braithwaite

AGTS alum, Adjunct faculty, Evangel University

Ph.d. student Regent University

reneab@gmail.com

Danielle Poulson

Current AGTS student

Springfield, Missouri

daniellepoulson@sbcglobal.net

Barbara Barnes

Current AGTS student

Springfield, Missouri

bebvw@hotmail.com

Dr. Jay Taylor

AGTS Director of Spiritual Formation

Springfield, Missouri

jtaylor@agts.edu

Dr. Steve Lim

AGTS Chair of Practical Theology

Springfield, Missouri

General Presbyterian—Chinese Fellowship

slim@agts.edu

Ed and Katie Peecher

Bishop, New Heritage Cathedral

Chicago, Illinois

Member, Board of Directors at AGTS

Bishoped5848@aol.com

Charles and Lillian McKinney

Assistant to the President

Florida Gulf Coast University

Fort Myers, Florida

Member, Board of Directors at AGTS

cmck@fgcu.edu

Zollie Smith

Secretary, New Jersey District

Member, Board of Directors at AGTS

zollies@njag.org

Sam and Linda Huddleston

Assistant Superintendent

Northern California/Nevada District

Council

shuddleston@agncn.com

mamahudd@juno.com

Jesse Miranda

Dean, Latin America Studies Program

Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, CA

Executive Presbyter

Director—Commission on Ethnicity

jmiranda@vanguard.edu

Scott Temple

Director, Intercultural Ministries A/G

Springfield, Missouri

stemple@ag.org

Darrell John Geddes
Pastor, Christ Church International
Minneapolis, Minnesota
dgeddes@urbanacademy.net

Audwin Barnes
Pastoral staff, New Heritage Cathedral
Chicago, Illinois
Humbled1@gmail.com

Fred Felton III
Evangelist
Chicago, Illinois
urbanimpactinternational@hotmail.com

Johan Mostert
Faculty, AGTS
Springfield, Missouri
jmostert@agts.edu

LaTonia Lambert
Pastoral Staff, New Heritage Cathedral
Chicago, Illinois
Latonia.lambert@sbcglobal.net

Vince Lambert
Pastoral Staff, New Heritage Cathedral
Chicago, Illinois
Vincent.lambert@sbcglobal.net

Debra Brown
Associate Pastor
Sheffield Family Worship Center
Kansas City, Missouri
dbrown@sflc.net

Manny Mill
President, *Koinonia* House
Wheaton, Illinois

Winston Larry
Pastor, New Covenant Assembly of God
Gary, Indiana
Wlarry2374@aol.com