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Suggested Title: Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century

Recommendation

General Church Budget Implications: Yes

Global Implications: Yes

WHEREAS, Black churches in The United Methodist Church today are compelled to mission and ministry by the same biblical and theological foundations that undergird the mission and ministry of the whole church. The call to *“go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded...”* (Matt. 28:19-20) is widely embraced as the cornerstone for the mission of the church. In the black church community, an equally important mandate for mission is the first public pronouncement of Jesus: *“The Spirit of the Lord hath anointed me to bring good news to the poor . . . proclaim release to the captives . . . recovery of sight to the blind . . . to let the oppressed go free. . . . Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”* (Luke 4:18-22).

WHEREAS, the Black church tradition deserves due recognition, because of the major contribution it has provided in the total development of Black people; and

WHEREAS, this tradition must be credited with bringing together Black people from all ranks and stations of life, supporting causes for the good of all people, without regard to race, creed, or color; and

WHEREAS, there is a solid basis for optimism about the ongoing force of the Black church, this optimism is grounded in the innate God-consciousness of Black people and their general disposition to be responsive to the Spirit of God and the need to wed present causes for communities of sisterhood and brotherhood, and to wed social justice to spiritual gems in prayer, worship, discipleship and mission from the distant past; and

WHEREAS, such a wedding occurred during the dismantling of the Central Jurisdiction and the civil rights movement when the Black spiritual “We Shall Overcome” became a rallying ground for all people who seek freedom, justice, and a community of sisterhood and brotherhood; and

WHEREAS, innately linked to this renowned slave hymn is a word of hope for the lonely, a word of peace for the warring, a word of love for all; and

WHEREAS, its nature is akin to the words of Jesus, “The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes” (John 3:8, NRSV), so it is with the power of the Black church; and

WHEREAS, since the Black church is rooted in an unseen Source, it does not yet appear to us what may be the full magnitude of its power for transformation, growth, and revitalization; and

WHEREAS, the Action Plans and priorities of this petition will establish administrative operations, and program directions to such a degree that the present and future generations will respond positively to our evangelism and discipleship ministries; and

WHEREAS, more people will commit their lives to Christ and claim a high level of loyalty and respect for the Black church and the United Methodist Church as our fore-parents and as the delegates of this General Conference of The United Methodist Church,

Now, therefore, be it resolved that

The 2012 General Conference of The United Methodist Church approves the continuation of Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century through the 2013 – 2016 quadrennium. Approval for continuance of SBC 21 will strengthen existing programs and enable new program development around the four Foci and beyond: (1) Leadership Development of principled Christian leaders for the church and the world; (2) As a part of the New Faith Communities emphasis SBC 21 will collaborate and partner with Path 1 to support the development of African-American Congregations and thus, create new places for new people and renewing existing congregations; (3) Engaging in ministry with the poor; and (4) Stamping out the killer diseases of poverty by improving health globally; (5) Expansion of relationships with the Central Conferences and African Congregations of African Descent in North America; (6) Expansion of models of strengthening youth and young adult ministries.

In the reality of critical ministry needs still present in the Black Church and the African-American communities the following Plan of Action shall be adopted as a basis for continuing of Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century throughout the 2013 – 2016 Quadrennium:

**Plan of Action for Strengthening the Black Church for the 21ST Century:
*The Mustard Seed Conspiracy of the Black Church!***

The *Conspiracy of Black Mustard Seed Churches* is about faithful Christians who are willing to seek God's kingdom above all else. No matter the location, God wants to use the Black Church to change the community in which it exist. All that is required is a little creativity, a little vision and faith.

VISION

To partner strategically with Congregation Resource Centers, The Council of Bishops, The Connectional Table, Annual Conference Cabinets and Connectional Ministries, General Agencies, Councils, and Commissions to succeed in undergirding Partner Congregations with the Wesleyan spirit including a biblical and theological application; and to equip them with practical tools and skills needed for vibrant worship, evangelism, discipleship, stewardship, mission, outreach, and effective administration.

MISSION

To transform, and sustain vital Black Congregations for making a greater and more prophetic witness for Jesus Christ in the world today.

PURPOSE

To offer The United Methodist Church the gift of a transformational learning model that enables an annual conference and/or one congregation to share its gift of vitality with other Congregations and other annual conferences that are seeking growth, vitality and transformation and wanting to expand their gifts in mission and ministry and, in the process, to transform, and strengthen Black congregations and ultimately to transform and strengthen The United Methodist Church.

Goal 1.

Leadership Development: Academy of Interns (“AOI”)

The goal of this program is to provide an infrastructure designed to select, deploy and expose eight (8) potential rising clergy to a full complement of experiences that will provide him/her with the skills and competencies needed to transform, establish or maintain a vital congregation. The program will also outline a new paradigm of training for SBC21’s two year, Academy of Interns, that will prepare rising ministers for assignment to a church within the Path1 initiative or other churches in need.

Program Deliverables:

1. Eight (8) Annual Conference Bishops/Cabinets, Boards of Ordained Ministries to confirm the selection of eight (8) Interns to be deployed to sixteen (16) of the most effective senior pastors and their respective staff and congregations for a two year internship deployment.
2. Sixteen (16) of the most effective senior pastors and their respective staff and congregations accept responsibility for nurturing, mentoring and coaching eight (8) deployed interns in support and in partnership with launching a sustainable SBC 21 two-year internship program.
3. Shall develop the next generation of Black clergy leadership in the United Methodist Church.
4. To gain on-site experience in congregational ministry;
5. To assign young students/local pastors to ministry settings of interest to them;
6. To support student/clergy development, reward their effort and use their gifts;
7. To create and provide a win-win situation for churches as well as for interns;
8. To prepare clergy leadership for new church starts.

Outcomes:

The Center for Leadership Development at Perkins School of Theology will provide a **Certificate in African American Church Leadership** for students participating in the Academy of Interns that would assist SBC21 in achieving the above goals by providing:

1. A common ground for Academy clergy to meet for six two-day sessions over the two-year mentorship to offer group and individualized training in leadership

- issues relating to the African American Church, and theological supervision to those in peer mentor groups;
2. Courses to build and sharpen skills in organizational management and strategic planning for effective church leadership;
 3. Courses to build and sharpen skills and provide opportunities for critical reflection in practical areas such as stewardship, personnel management, evangelism, new church development, cross-cultural appointments, volunteer management, and conflict resolution;
 4. Training and support in spiritual/emotional/fiscal/physical self-care as ministry;
 5. A place for Academy clergy to bring concerns, interests, and issues for peer and professional review and discussion;
 6. An environment for establishing mutual peer-support networks;
 7. Guidance for integrating current internship experiences with and in the contexts of their appointed ministry.

Goal 2.

Church Growth: Increase the number of Congregation Resource Centers and Annual Conference PC Training Events from 34 to 56; and to enroll and train up to 500 PCs.

The primary task of CRCs and Annual Conference Resource Centers is to train and equip Partner Congregations via covenant relationships. They host training events, expose partner congregations to new ministries, provide support and follow-up.

Partner Congregations are local churches who are committed to becoming vital; a team of lay and clergy that are in a coaching covenant with a CRC and/or Annual Conference to transform and strengthen their church. They will write written reports and be evaluated by coaches, CRCs and the National Director of SBC 21.

Program Deliverables:

1. Sustain up to 20 Congregation Resource Centers (CRCs) by annual training and evaluation of their program.
2. Assist with and/or co-sponsor 31 Annual Conference PC Training Events.
3. Cultivate 8 PCs into CRCs.

Measures to Support Goal #2:

1. Implement an ongoing training the trainers (CRCs) program initiative.
2. Engage in ongoing nurturing of relationships with 31 Annual Conferences including its Bishop, Cabinet, Connectional Ministries and Boards of Ordained Ministry where deeper partnership commitments toward co-sponsoring of training events are solidified.
3. Establish liaison and linkages between SBC 21 and annual conference constituencies and provide counsel and feedback about programs and projects to the national office.
4. Develop more effective new program paradigms and structures for implementing SBC 21 training events within jurisdictions, annual conferences, and districts.

Outcomes:

1. Enroll and enable 500 PCs to achieve Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely (S.M.A.R.T.) Goals.
2. PCs 1st Time Training Event 70 % cost covered
3. PCs 2nd Time Training Event 50% cost covered
4. PCs 3rd Time Training Event 25% cost covered
5. 5) Sponsor no less than 5 PC Teams per Training Event and not more than 10 PC Teams per training event

Goal 3.

Engaging in Ministry with the Poor:

The sight of children playing in urban neighborhoods across the country is common, but when we see a group of young Black boys, we should have mixed emotions. In part we are full of hope at the thought of the potential and promise in those young minds, but part of us are saddened when we consider their environment, their family circumstances and their school involvement. Many of these children are defeated in life before it ever begins because of chemical or physical abuse in the home and poverty and violence in the community.

The goal of this priority is to recruit/identify at least five CRCs that have a passion for and commitment to teaching Black boys what it means to be African American men, spiritually, culturally, and physically. These three dimensions of self will be explored thoroughly to infuse the boys with a strong self-image and positive self-esteem by knowing who they are in Christ. The basic method by which this goal will be met is to invite Congregation Resource Centers to design training events and partnerships that will recruit African American men to engage the boys in personal relationships and thus model and teach Black Christian manhood.

Program Deliverables:

The CRC partnership/program will address the experience of Black boys from a holistic perspective of Christian ministry. Additionally it will explore and affirm the innate spirituality and moral fiber of African American culture and will provide positive experiences and dialogue about African American culture, heritage, and traditions, placed in the context of Scripture.

It will examine issues of male adolescence and puberty, addressing everything from personal hygiene to human sexuality. It will provide an affirming atmosphere in which to examine the social and emotional aspects of daily life specific to the experience of Black boys.

Outcomes:

1. Participants will learn to respect God by using clean and positive language and upholding moral standards for behavior;

2. Will learn to respect oneself by being positive in behavior and participating in activities that will build character and integrity and what it means to be an African American man spiritually, physically, and culturally;
3. Will learn to honor family by using ones God-given potential in every situation; and
4. Will show respect for others by treating them the way one would like to be treated, encouraging them and treating them fairly.

Goal 4.

Africa/Diaspora (new Partner Congregations)

The expansion of SBC 21 to be more global in its relationship with the Central Conferences in Africa as well as with congregations of African Descent (Latin, Caribbean) in the United States.

Program Deliverables:

1. Consult/collaborate with African College of Bishops for planning and prioritizing programs.
2. Research demographics in the United States.
3. Host at least two meetings with the College of Bishops of the Central Conference in Africa (one during the Council of Bishops meeting and one during their College of Bishops meeting on the campus of Africa University).
4. Ascertain perceptions, stereotypes etc. that might be distinct cultural differences and obstacles which hinders the development and nurturing of strong and sustained relationships within the African Diaspora family. This may lead us into describing the relationship between "US and THEM."
5. Sponsor an Africa/Diaspora Convocation

Measures to support Goal:

1. Identify/Research programs and initiatives (past or present) that general agencies and national caucuses have been or are involved in and what special features of their programs and services deserve recognition (might there be opportunities for inter-intra agency cross-functional and collaborative efforts).
2. Identify/Research what programs are needed, but not offered.
3. Suggest the most appropriate UMC enterprise that should sponsor/champion such a ministry.
4. Identify geographical areas with the highest density of populated constituents as well as active worshipping congregations.
5. Determine who are the most prominent UMC clergy and lay African leaders (including college and seminary students) to be invited to subsequent strategy meetings, conversations, and planning.
6. Identify practices and conditions which compromise the justice and integrity of Black United Methodist congregations, general agency staff, etc.
7. Describe the relationship between US UMC African constituents with SBC 21 and BMCR. What argument can our strategy team make regarding why this endeavor?

8. Are there any recent incidences where actions of any UMC entity may cause problems for the integrity of the ministry we are proposing? If so, are the circumstances or practices which, if left unattended may eventually undermine the integrity of our efforts?

Goal 5.

Proven Hospitality Extended to Youth & Young Adults:

The goal of this priority is to be genuinely inviting to our youth and young adults, and thus recognizing that there is no way around engaging popular culture which is often strikingly strange to communities of faith. Popular culture includes all these elements of our cultural surroundings that are mass mediated: World Wide Web, Facebook, texting, Twittering, iPod, iPad, movies, television, radio, etc.

SBC 21 is convinced that we can work with youth and young adults in religious community if we remember these three elements from the mundane way in which the disciples met Jesus while walking to Emmaus: In the midst of their daily practices the disciples engaged in conversation with the stranger on the road, a conversation included their retelling of the events of the past few days and the stranger's interpretation of these, and finally they quite literally broke bread together in the midst of community.

Program Deliverables:

For many members of The United Methodist Church there is no question that youth and young adults often appear strange. Wild color and styles of hair, diverse body piercings, clothes that are worn several sizes too large and too low below the waist line; these are only the most obvious signs some of the today's youth and young adults adopt.

This goal shall open up our church to the strangers we encounter on our historical and traditional road to Emmaus and that openness has to be intentionally welcoming.

Outcomes:

Our young people can help the UMC to discover the ways in which pop culture supports or contests estrangement. They can also help the UMC recognize that some of the ways in which we practice our faith may estrange us from youth and young adults.

Recommendations of Structure for SBC 21

The Coordinating Committee Membership: will consist of fifteen (15) members.

1. Two from each of the five jurisdictions, who shall be named by the respective College of Bishops. It is recommended that within the two from each jurisdiction, there should be one lay, and one clergy person. Further, it is recommended for purposes of continuity that one of the two recommended shall have been members of the current Coordinating Committee.
2. One person named by National Black Methodists for Church Renewal.
3. One youth, one young adult and two bishops, named by the Council of Bishops.

4. One person named by each general agency and commission as their representative to resource the Coordinating Committee (at the expense of the agency or commission).

During the transition of finishing the work of the current quadrennium, the 2013-2016 Coordinating Committee will convene February 15 – 16, 2013.

Principal Functions:

1. Lead the organization to fulfill its mission through planning, policy making, development of support and financial commitment from the United Methodist Church, and monitoring results.
2. Formulate and adopt policies related to the strategic work of the initiative.
3. Select, employ, and evaluate work performance of national director/chief executive officer.
4. Approve and monitor long-range goals and objectives.
5. Adopt and monitor the organization's operating budget.
6. Protect the assets of the organization.
7. Form linkages with other United Methodist organizations.
8. Interpret the organization to the UMC.
9. Ensure the effectiveness of the Coordinating Committee.

Function & Accountability of Coordinating Committee:

The Coordinating Committee is charged with the responsibility for:

1. Keeping alive the training of congregational focus of the plan of action, and making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
2. Hiring and evaluating the performance of the National Director (full-time staff person who oversees the work and implementation of this Plan).
3. In consultation with the national director, determining the congregations that shall serve as Congregation Resource Centers with accountability and evaluation of services (e.g. contractual agreement, biennial time-line, and certification).
4. Setting a budget and fiscal oversight based on delivery of services and partnership between Congregation Resource Centers and Partner Congregations.
5. Establishing standards for evaluating churches that are involved in the Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century initiative.
6. Evaluating the effectiveness of the Plan of Action and reporting with follow-up recommendations to the 2016 General Conference.
7. Reporting to the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD) and National Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) on an annual basis.
8. Offering key learning and models to the wider denomination as a gift of hope, healing and wholeness.
9. Expanding and deepening relationships with United Methodist seminaries and other groups involved in congregational renewal and training.
10. Offering training events for Congregation Resource Centers and Partner Congregations.

Staffing:

A National Director shall be named to guide, direct and implement the Plan of Action, under the governance of the Coordinating Committee. The National Director will supervise other staff needed for the initiative which includes clerical support staff (1.0 full-time equivalent) and non-staff volunteers recruited to serve as partner congregation coaches to assist congregations in implementing their follow-up ministry plans. The volunteer coaches will be trained and deployed as necessary. A function of the National Director includes working with the General Board of Discipleship and the Coordinating Committee in providing leadership for the SBC 21 initiative.

Further duties shall be these:

1. Provide oversight of training programs;
2. Contact and work with Congregation Resource Centers, Annual Conferences, and Partner Congregations;
3. Conduct evaluations of each event and share findings with the Coordinating Committee and General Board of Discipleship;
4. Ensure training of leadership teams within Congregation Resource Centers and Annual Conferences;
5. Recruit and supervise non-staff volunteers to serve as PC coaches and follow-up mentors;
6. Publish annually a “Journal of Learnings” detailing learnings and insights from the work of SBC21;
7. Maintain accurate and thorough records of all activities related to the Congregation Resources Centers and Partner Congregations;
8. Maintain open communications with Black Methodists for Church Renewal and report to its annual meeting; and
9. Report biannually to the General Board of Discipleship.

Date:

SBC 21 General Board of Discipleship

Fred A. Allen

Phone: