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Charles Edward Blake, Sr. (born August 5, 1940 in Little Rock, Arkansas) is the presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ, Inc., a 7 million-member Pentecostal-Holiness denomination. The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) is the fifth largest Protestant religious denomination in the world, the largest Pentecostal church in the country and the second largest Pentecostal organization in the world with churches in 60 countries worldwide.

Today, West Angeles Church of God in Christ (COGIC) is one of the largest churches in the Western United States, with a membership of over 25,000. West Angeles offers more than 80 ministries for psychological, social and economic enhancement for its members and the Los Angeles community.

From 1985 to 2009, Bishop Blake maintained the position of COGIC Prelate for the First Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of California, where he was responsible for overseeing over 250 churches. In November 2007, he was appointed the fifth Presiding Bishop of COGIC and the seventh leader in succession. As presiding bishop, Blake has become the new face, and an international spokesperson for Pentecostalism as it is known today.

In response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa, Blake founded and was Chief Executive Officer of Pan African Children's Fund (PACF). Save Africa's Children, a program of PACF, assisted over 300 grassroots and faith-based projects in sub-Saharan Africa, reaching over 90,000 AIDS affected children. Save Africa's Children supported more than 240,000 children in 400 orphan care programs throughout more than 23 nations on the continent of Africa.

Currently, Charles E. Blake, Sr. serves as Co-Chairperson for the Executive Committee of the Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA). He was the founding Chairman of the Board of Directors for the C.H. Mason Theological Seminary and has served as an Executive Committee member on the Board of Directors of the Interdenominational Theological Seminary. He also served as an Advisory Committee Member of the Pentecostal World Conference.

In 2008, Bishop Blake was a keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention's first Ecumenical Service, where he pronounced his status as pro-life democrat and challenged both democrats and republicans to protect the rights of the unborn and born alike. In 2009, President Barack Obama tapped Bishop Blake to serve on his 25-person White House Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Charles Blake has also given keynote addresses at Princeton University, Harvard University, Hampton University, Los Angeles Mayor's Prayer Breakfast and scores of other institutional gatherings.

Bishop Blake holds a B.A from California Western University; his masters from Interdenominational Theological Center; an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from California Graduate School of Theology; and Doctor of Law degree from Oral Roberts; and Biola University.
CHARLES E. BLAKE
Biography

As the student body president at Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), Blake mobilized his school for civil rights demonstrations, including protests in Selma. “Once you’ve found something you are willing to die for, you apply that to almost any other situation that you confront. So that was a life-changing experience, to be in Selma . . . .”, said Blake.

Bishop Blake has received numerous awards, commendations and accolades. In 1982, he was selected by Ebony magazine as one of the 15 “Greatest Preachers in America”. Since 2007, Ebony has recognized Bishop Blake annually, as one of the 100+ most influential African Americans. Special recognitions include the Distinguished Leadership Award presented by the African Presidential Archives and Research Center at Boston University (2007), the Trumpet Award (2006), the Salvation Army’s William Booth Award, the Greenlining Institute’s Big Heart Award, and was the designated recipient of the L.A. Urban League’s Whitney M. Young Award (2000). In 2003, Bishop Blake was awarded the Harvard Foundation Humanitarian Medal for his work with Save Africa’s Children. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors designated February 5, 2004 as “Bishop Charles E. Blake Day.”

Charles Blake met his wife of 52 years, Mae Lawrence, at a COGIC Youth Congress in Denver Colorado. They married a year later. Mae Blake, who occupies an office next to her husband’s office, is a committed partner in the building, growth, vision and sustaining power of West Angeles Church of God in Christ. The Blakes have 3 children and 8 grandchildren.

Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake is respected as righteous man of God, a leader, a visionary, an eloquent orator, author, a humanitarian and an advocate for those under-represented and under-served. He travels the world extensively to preach the gospel.

Bishop Blake professes an agreement with the scripture to “whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” Blake states, “The capacity of a pastor, a church and a denomination, if it is committed to the good and advancement of people and to its true mandate; it can serve and provide resources and exert positive influence at a level that it could not, if it were not for a strong structure, and organizational strength.”
CHARLES E. BLAKE
Personal Facts

- Bishop Blake preached his first sermon July 25, 1957 at the age of 16.

- Charles E. Blake was licensed to preach in 1957 and ordained in 1962.

- In 1969, Bishop Blake became pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ, in Los Angeles, with 50 members.

- In 1982, he was selected by Ebony magazine as one of the 15 “Greatest Preachers in America”. Since he has been named annually.

- From 1985 to 2009, Bishop Blake maintained the position of COGIC Prelate for the First Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of California, where he was responsible for overseeing over 250 churches.

- Bishop Charles E. Blake, pastor of West Angeles Church Of God In Christ, founded Save Africa’s Children in 2001.

- In 2003, Bishop Blake was awarded the Harvard Foundation Humanitarian Medal for his work with Save Africa’s Children.

- November 15, 2004 Blake came out with his first book “Encountering God”

- In November 2007, he was appointed the fifth Presiding Bishop of COGIC and the seventh leader in succession.

- In 2008, Bishop Blake was a keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention's first Ecumenical Service, where he pronounced his status as pro-life democrat and challenged both democrats and republicans to protect the rights of the unborn and born alike.

- Along with colleague Dr. Elijah H. Hankerson, Bishop Blake came out with his second book “Keys for Effective Preaching & Teaching of the Gospel”

- Currently, Charles E. Blake, Sr. serves as Co-Chairperson for the Executive Committee of the Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA).
West Angeles Church of God in Christ Facts

- The Church Of God In Christ, Inc. was founded in 1897, incorporated in 1907, and is now the fourth largest denomination in the United States of America.

- The Presiding Bishop of the Church Of God In Christ is Charles E. Blake.

- Elder Charles Harrison Mason is the founder and chief apostle of the Church Of God In Christ.

- The first year of the Holy Convocation was 1907. It was held in Memphis, TN.

- Bishop C. H. Mason is entombed in a marble crypt inside Mason Temple, which was the largest church building owned by a predominantly black religious denomination in the United States at the time of its completion in 1940. It seats 3,732 people.

- COGIC believes that the only means of being cleansed from sin is through repentance, faith in the precious Blood of Jesus Christ and being baptized in water. Members also believe that the Bible is the inspired and perfect written Word of God. There is only one God, eternally existent in three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. Members also believe that regeneration by the Holy Ghost is absolutely essential for personal salvation.

- The Church Of God In Christ ministers to an estimated 6.5 million members around the world.

- To learn more about COGIC, visit our website: www.cogic.org or the Centennial Web site at www.cogiccentennial.org

- West Angeles Church Of God In Christ was founded in 1943 by C.E. Church, Sr. It was located inside a small store front on Vermont Avenue in the heart of Los Angeles.

- C.E. Church built a permanent church home for the congregation in 1955 at 3501 West Adams Boulevard.

- After C.E. Church’s passing, Charles E. Blake was appointed pastor of West Angeles in 1969 to head the 50-member congregation.

- Due to its expansive growth in the 1970s, West Angeles moved to its 3045 Crenshaw Boulevard location in Los Angeles in 1981. A few years later construction began on the Education Building, Crystal Room and administrative offices which were completed in 1987.

- Also in 1987, West Angeles Bible College started its first classes and a full-time counseling department was established. The West Angeles Christian Academy also experienced unprecedented growth during this year.

- Throughout the 1990s West Angeles experienced a surge in growth and in ministry.

- On April 28, 2001 West Angeles moved to yet another location in Los Angeles. The church built a 5,000-seat cathedral just two blocks from the original Crenshaw Boulevard location.
• The COGIC Presiding Bishop at the time, Bishop G.E. Patterson, preached the first service at the new cathedral.

• Today Bishop Blake is still pastor of West Angeles Church Of God In Christ as well as the current presiding bishop of the denomination.

• West Angeles has more than 25,000 members and over 80 ministries in the church.

• Bishop Blake is known as the bishop to the stars. He has a diverse congregation from Hollywood celebrities to individuals who live in the community.

• For more information about Bishop Charles Blake or West Angeles Church Of God In Christ, visit www.westa.org

• Save Africa's Children (SAC) is a program of the Pan African Children's Fund that has assisted over 350 grassroots and faith-based projects in Sub-Saharan Africa.

• Bishop Charles E. Blake, pastor of West Angeles Church Of God In Christ, founded Save Africa's Children in 2001.

• Save Africa's Children is among the first and largest African-American-founded organizations providing direct support to AIDS orphans.

• SAC has helped over 90,000 AIDS-affected children in the seven years since its founding.

• One of the program's main goals is to create awareness of the fact that ninety percent of children orphaned by AIDS globally live in Sub-Saharan Africa; this includes more than 17 million children under the age of 15.

• Save Africa's Children seeks to expand the scope of care for AIDS orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa and strengthen the capacity of families and communities that provide care for AIDS-affected children.

• SAC is partnering with the existing efforts in Africa to provide safe, compassionate and productive alternatives through residential care and community-based programs.

• Grants from Save Africa's Children have supported education, health and training initiatives, African infrastructure and community-based and orphan care programs for those living in the Sub-Saharan region.

• SAC is working with a network of researchers and non-governmental organizations concerned with strengthening the response for HIV/AIDS affected children and has been represented at a number of international forums about the topic.

• Over 61,000 church groups and faith-based organizations support Save Africa's Children. Individuals and corporate organizations also sponsor the charity.

• For more information about Save Africa's Children and the programs it supports, visit www.saveafricaschildren.com
Attainments & Awards
Executive Committee of the Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA), Co-Chair
President Barak Obama White House Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Advisor
C.H. Mason Theological Seminary, Chair of the Board of Directors
Executive Committee Member, Board of Directors
Interdenominational Theological Seminary, Board of Directors
Oral Roberts University, Board of Directors
International Charismatic Bible Ministries, Board of Directors
Pentecostal World Conference, Advisory Committee Member
Los Angeles Ecumenical Congress, Founder and Co-chair

The Salvation Army Williams Booth award
The Greenlining Institute's Big heart Award
2000 LA Urban League's Whitney M. Young Award Recipient
2003 Harvard Foundation Humanitarian Medal
15 “Greatest Preachers in America”.
100 Most influential African Americans
HUMAN COALITION LAUNCHES THREE-YEAR INITIATIVE WITH CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

Contact: Robert E. Coleman, Jr., Public Relations Director, Church Of God In Christ, Inc., 901-235-2160; Meg McCrory, Senior Director of Marketing Communications, Human Coalition, 214-295-7301

PLANO, Texas, July 29, 2016 /Christian Newswire/ -- Human Coalition is honored to announce the inauguration of a three-year initiative with the Church Of God In Christ to advance their common mission of making abortion unthinkable and unavailable in America. Together, Human Coalition and the Church Of God In Christ (COGIC), which is the oldest Pentecostal denomination in the country, will work to promote the culture of life in African-American communities.

Bishop Charles Blake, Presiding Bishop of the Church Of God In Christ, praised the initiative as a much-needed response to tragedy in the modern world. "We see an escalation in violence around the world that is troubling," Bishop Blake said. "Terrorism, racial tension in America, and escalating crime. Indeed, this violence worsens daily as hundreds of thousands of children are snatched from their mothers' wombs prematurely and killed through abortion." Bishop Blake drew a poignant parallel between the life-saving ministry of pro-life Christians and Jesus' command to let the little children come unto me. "What we do for the preborn and the born children in our society is our way of showing the Love and Compassion of Jesus Christ."

Reverend Dean Nelson, Human Coalition's National Director of Church Outreach, called the initiative an answer to prayer. "COGIC has churches in every major city in America," said Rev. Nelson. "Over the next three years, we will work together to educate and activate the church as we move towards our goal of making abortion unthinkable in urban America."

The joint initiative encompasses several objectives including:

- Both organizations will cooperatively work on abortion-ending strategic plans, city-by-city
- Human Coalition will provide training, resources, and education to enhance COGIC pro-life work
- COGIC members will utilize Human Coalition's prayer app to intercede for hurting women in cities across America.

Since November 2015, COGIC has engaged in a "Family Life Campaign" challenging church members to take personal action in the fight for life. Bishop Vincent Mathews, Jr., President of the International Missions Department, encouraged members to adopt children from the foster care system and babies in danger of being aborted. "It's about going home, rolling up your sleeves, and taking care of a child..." he told members.

Bishop Mathews puts the harm done by abortion in perspective by comparing it to the Civil Rights violations of the last century. "Some 3,446 African-
Americans were lynched in the U.S. between 1882 and 1986,” he said. "We lose more African-Americans to abortion in this country every three days. Our church does not believe in abortion - we have to do something about it."

"Launching a joint initiative with the Church Of God In Christ shows the power of collaboration and coalition as we rescue children and serve families across America," said Human Coalition President and Co-Founder, Brian Fisher. "African-Americans are disproportionally impacted by abortion, and I deeply appreciate the Church Of God In Christ's leadership in stopping this injustice. I hope other major denominations will join us as we work together to make abortion unthinkable and unavailable. Christians can and should end the abortion holocaust in our country."

For any questions, please contact Robert E. Coleman, Jr., Public Relations Director at Church Of God In Christ, Inc. at 901-235-2160 or Meg McCrory, Senior Director of Marketing Communications, Human Coalition at 214-295-7301.

The Church Of God In Christ is the oldest Pentecostal denominations in the World and the 4th largest Protestant group in the United States with churches in over 82 countries worldwide and a membership of nearly 6.5 million adherents.

Human Coalition is one of the largest pro-life organizations in the country, committed to ending abortion in America by rescuing children and serving families in key, abortion-riddled communities nationwide.
MEGACHURCH PASTOR BISHOP CHARLES BLAKE DENOUNCES RECENT FATAL SHOOTINGS

Bishop Charles Blake Held Press Conference to Denounce Dallas Police Killings and Execution Style Killings of Black Men in Louisiana and Minnesota

LOS ANGELES - July 8, 2016 - PRLog -- Charles Blake, the presiding Bishop of Church of God in Christ, the fifth largest Christian denomination in the world, held a press conference in Cincinnati to address the recent fatal shooting in Louisiana, Minnesota and Texas. Blake denounced the “murderous” shooting that killed five Dallas police officers and “execution style” killings of young Black men in Louisiana and Minnesota.

To a room packed with Church of God in Christ members who were attending a conference in Cincinnati, as well as members of the Cincinnati community, Blake offered a prayer for peace in the wake of the recent violence in America. Cincinnati Mayor, John Cranley and President of the NAACP Cincinnati Branch, Robert Richardson Sr. also spoke at the press conference.

Blake’s press conference statement follows: “The Church of God in Christ denounces in the strongest way possible the murderous sniper attack on the police in Dallas last night. This vicious act perpetuates the cycle of violence and injustice that it ostensibly sought to address. We absolutely reject this brutal attack on the police. We repudiate the notion that it is in any way excusable, even in the face of the recent homicidal behavior of police officers in Baton Rouge and Falcon Heights.

It seems to us impossible to justify the execution style killing of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge. This
is true even though that young man was armed and known to the police. Execution by the police force on the streets does not constitute due process in the United States. We urge the community to maintain peaceful vigilance in pursuit of justice in this case. We shall not rush to judgment despite appearances.

The tragedy of Philandro Catille’s death at the hands of another police officer is as deplorable. There must be justice in this case too.

We commend the Dallas police force for their heroism and professionalism in ending the attack. We support the prosecution of any co-conspirators to the full extent of the law.

Our prayers are with the families of all of the victims at this time.”

Blake is the pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ, with a membership of over 25,000. Blake is Co-Chairperson for the Executive Committee of the Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA) which represents over 40,000 Pentecostal / Charismatic Christian congregations in Canada, the U.S.A. and Mexico. President Barack Obama Blake to serve on his 25-person White House Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.
FOR Former President Bill Clinton praises West Angeles COGIC redevelopment success

Bishop Charles Blake Discusses Church Concerns and President Clinton Claims West Angeles Redevelopment is Blueprint for National Initiative to Improve Quality of Life in Urban Communities

LOS ANGELES - June 8, 2016 - PRLog -- Former President Bill Clinton and a host of Los Angeles-based politicians descended on West Angeles Church of God in Christ (COGIC), where Bishop Charles E. Blake is the pastor. West Angeles has one of largest congregations in the Country with over 25,000 members. Local and State representatives often visit West Angeles, especially during the campaign season, however, a visit from a former President is not commonplace.

"When a former President of the United States is inclined to visit West Angeles Church of God in Christ for Sunday worship service, out of respect for the highest office in our Country, we are honored to oblige, irrespective of party affiliation. The attendance and participation of any politician is not an endorsement from Bishop Charles Blake, the leadership of West Angeles, nor the COGIC denomination," said Gladys Ross, Chief Operating Officer of West Angeles COGIC.

The 1954 tax reform act, commonly termed the "Johnson amendment," instructs that all tax-exempt organizations are banned from supporting or opposing political candidates.

"Legally, constitutionally, the church cannot and should not exert influence over the outcome of elections and individuals involved in elections. Morally and from a humane perspective, the
church should take positions on issues that impact people; the poor, disfranchised, those who cannot speak loudly for themselves either because of lack of resources or lack of access. We don't take partisan positions, nor do we endorse individuals. However, the church can educate people and encourage people, to participate in the electoral process," said Blake.

Blake and Clinton are both natives of Arkansas. Prior to attending the service, Blake and Clinton met privately. "I welcomed the unique opportunity, as the Presiding Bishop of over 12,000 COGIC churches and the Co-Chair of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA), to share with President Clinton that we cannot compromise our stance, and are doctrinally opposed to all policies that support same-sex marriage and abortion. It was also important to begin a conversation about what I perceive is an increasing infringement on the religious rights and freedoms of the Black Church," said Blake.

Clinton addressed the packed church and was received with a standing ovation. "I was in West Angeles before you had such fancy digs, I have noticed that you did not just move into your fancy digs, you also helped to develop the whole area. Something you should be very proud of," said Clinton.

West Angeles COGIC has developed over 400 units of housing, and commercial property, including West Angeles Plaza, in the inner city of Los Angeles. It has initiated and implemented scores of civic, social, financial and educational programs that have assisted thousands of congregants and Los Angeles County residents. West Angeles' newest development initiative will provide modern housing for senior citizens in the Los Angeles Community. Blake and West Angeles are in the midst of a capital campaign to develop the West Angeles Family Life Center which will provide educational, medical, financial, social and recreational resources to its congregants and community-at-large.

"We are very proud the of expansion and redevelopment initiatives that have improved the quality of life of our members and our community. COGIC Urban Initiatives is our national platform that is positively impacting our neighborhoods throughout the country. The Black Church remains the cornerstone of our communities and it's our responsibility to provide access to resources oftentimes out of reach for our neighbors," stated Blake.

Clinton continued to praise the success of West Angeles' programs to audible cheers and claps from the congregants. "Do you believe that we can have shared prosperity like you are trying to create all around this church? If we did what you've done here, if we did it everywhere in America, could we reduce inequality? Could we restore upward mobility? Could we help bring people back from the depths of despair? I believe we could," stated Clinton.

"It would be tremendous if West Angeles' CDC and COGIC's Urban Initiatives could be implemented in communities around our Nation. Helping our community, our 'brother in need'; the 'widows and the orphans' is not political, its scriptural and we will continue to do the work of the Lord at West Angeles Church of God in Christ," concluded Blake.
BISHOP CHARLES BLAKE & WEST ANGELES CHURCH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP WITH WELLS FARGO GARNER

Wells Fargo launched an advertising campaign in Sunday’s Los Angeles Times featuring Bishop Charles Blake, pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ (COGIC) and Presiding Bishop of the 5th largest denomination in the world. Blake and West Angeles COGIC have partnered with Wells Fargo to make significant improvements in the urban Los Angeles community wherein the 5,000 seat West Angeles COGIC Cathedral resides.

The high-profile advertisement in the Los Angeles Times demonstrates Wells Fargo’s recognition of Blake and West Angeles CDC’s commitment to develop and improve their community. “Wells Fargo Bank has been a committed partner to West Angeles Community Development Corporation. For over 20 years, Wells Fargo Bank has demonstrated strong support for our programs in homeownership, financial capabilities and small business development here in South L.A.,” Grant D. Power, Executive Director, West Angeles CDC.

West Angeles CDC, with the support of numerous corporate partners, have developed over 400 units
of housing, and commercial property, including West Angeles Plaza, in the inner city of Los Angeles. It has initiated and implemented scores of civic, social, financial and educational programs that have assisted thousands of congregants and Los Angeles County residents. “The primary benefit of a mega church is that it has resources to initiate programs that are conceived for the work for the advancement of the community,” said Blake.

West Angeles CDC newest development initiative will provide modern housing for senior citizens in the Los Angeles Community. Blake and West Angeles COGIC are in the midst of a capital campaign to develop the West Angeles Family Life Center which will provide educational, medical, financial, social and recreational resources to its congregants and community-at-large. “With the development of the Family Life Center, our goal is to leave a stable, future ministry legacy for the community, strengthen the fiber of the church’s outreach to men, women, children, and families in the community, and to further impact the nation and world for Jesus Christ,” stated Blake.

About Bishop Charles Blake:

Bishop Blake is the pastor of one of the largest churches in the Western United States, West Angeles Church of God in Christ, with a membership of over 25,000. He is recognized as one of the greatest preachers of this generation with a message that ministers to the whole person and brings together people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds.

On April 6, 2009 in Washington, D.C., President Barack Obama sought Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake to serve on his 25-person White House Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Blake was chosen as one of four individuals to speak at the Democratic National Convention’s first Ecumenical Service, where he pronounced his status as pro-life Democrat and challenged both Democrats and Republicans to protect the rights of the unborn and born alike.

About West Angeles CDC:

The mission of West Angeles Community Development Corporation is to increase social and economic justice, demonstrate compassion and alleviate poverty as tangible expressions of the Kingdom of God through the vehicle of community development.
MEMPHIS, Tenn., March 8, 2016 /Christian Newswire/ -- Church of God in Christ Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr. was elected to serve as Co-Chairperson for the Executive Committee of the Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA). Bishop Blake joins PCCNA Chairperson Assemblies of God Assistant General Superintendent Alton Garrison; PCCNA President Jeff Farmer; Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada General Superintendent David Wells, Treasurer, and Foursquare Church Chief Operating Officer Sterling Bracket serving as Secretary. The PCCNA Executive Board also includes the following as Members-At-Large: Church of God General Overseer Bishop Mark Williams; Assemblies of God USA General Superintendent George Wood; United Holy Church of America Bishop Elijah Williams; National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference President Samuel Rodriguez; International Pentecostal Holiness Church General Overseer Bishop Doug Beacham and Grupo Unidad President Fermin Garcia.

"The PCCNA Board of Administration was honored to elect Bishop Blake unanimously to serve as their new co-chairperson for a three year term effective February 2016," says Farmer. "Bishop Blake is a statesman and community transformer. We’re honored that he is carving out time in his
PRESS RELEASE
Christian Newswire
March 8, 2016

busy schedule to partner with us in our vision to demonstrate unity in the power of the Spirit.” PCCNA represents over 40,000 Pentecostal/Charismatic Christian congregations in Canada, the U.S.A. and Mexico.

Bishop Blake is the pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ, one of the largest churches in the Western United States, with a membership of over 25,000. He is recognized as one of the great preachers of this generation with a message that ministers to the whole person and brings together people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. On April 6, 2009, in Washington, D.C., President Barack Obama sought Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr. to serve on his 25-person White House Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

This one-year appointment is a testament to his passion for the community and his desire to unite all people for the common good.

The heart of Bishop Blake is seen quite clearly in the love that he has for the children in Africa who have become orphans because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic plaguing the continent. In response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa, Bishop Blake founded, the Pan African Children’s Fund (PACF). Save Africa’s Children, a program of PACF, has provided support to over 420 orphan care programs, 200,000 children in 24 nations throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

Bishop Blake has also formerly served as an Advisory Committee Member of the Pentecostal World Conference, and as the founder and Co-chair of the Los Angeles Ecumenical Congress (LAEC), an interdenominational coalition of religious leaders and pastors.

Second only to his call as a minister of the Gospel, Bishop Blake says his most treasured accomplishments are those of a devoted husband to Lady Mae Lawrence Blake, and a loving father and grandfather to their three children and eight grandchildren.

The Church of God in Christ is one of the oldest Pentecostal denominations in the World and the 4th largest Protestant group in the United States with churches in over 70 countries worldwide and a membership of nearly 6.5 Million adherents.
BISHOP CHARLES BLAKE TO SPEAK AT MAYOR ERIC GARCETTI’S ANNUAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

The 43rd Annual Los Angeles Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast held at Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles

Los Angeles, Calif., January 14, 2016 (Newswire.com) - Bishop Charles Blake will be the keynote speaker at the annual Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast. The prestigious breakfast started in 1973, when Mayor Tom Bradley asked area pastors to meet with him in prayer for the city. Civic and religious leaders have gathered annually to celebrate God’s blessing and seek His guidance. The breakfast has continued and grown over the years. Each breakfast features a nationally celebrated keynote speaker. Past Speakers have included, Billy Graham, Patricia Heaton, Lou Holtz, Rick Warren, Pat Boone, and Craig T. Nelson.

The 43rd Annual Los Angeles Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast will feature keynote speaker, Charles Blake, Sr., the Presiding Bishop, of the largest African-American denomination, boasting a membership in excess of seven million. Bishop Blake is the pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ, one of the largest churches in the Western United States, with a membership of over 25,000. He is recognized as one of the great preachers of this generation and one of the most influential figures in Los Angeles.

In addition to breakfast, it will be an inspiring morning of fellowship, worship and prayer for our City as we hear an important message that Bishop Blake will deliver,” noted LA Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast website.

TRY WILLIAMS CONSULTING GROUP, CHIEF STRATEGIST
“We guarantee you are in for a treat as we have worked hard to ensure that you are fed both spiritually and physically. In addition to breakfast, it will be an inspiring morning of fellowship, worship and prayer for our City as we hear an important message that Bishop Blake will deliver,” noted LA Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast website.

President Barack Obama sought Bishop Blake to serve on his 25-person White House Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. He was also chosen as one of four individuals to speak at the Democratic National Convention’s first Ecumenical Service.

“It is an honor to speak at this year’s prayer breakfast. As Los Angeles, our nation and the world grapple with violence, economic turmoil, and political and social instability, it is important that prayer is practiced as an integral and necessary component towards positive change,” said Bishop Blake.

The prayer breakfast is on Saturday, February 13, 2016 at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, California. Ticket information is available at http://www.lamayorsprayerbreakfast.com/.
LEADER OF THE LARGEST AFRICAN-AMERICAN DENOMINATION CELEBRATES 47 YEARS AS PASTOR OF MEGA CHURCH

Bishop Charles Blake Celebrates 47 Years as Pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ

LOS ANGELES - Jan. 11, 2016 - PRLog -- Bishop Charles Blake, presiding Bishop of the COGIC faith, celebrated his 47th anniversary as pastor of the West Angeles Church of God in Christ in Los Angeles, California. During the past eight years, Blake has served as leader of the Church of God in Christ, the oldest and largest African-American denomination with 7 million members worldwide.

Bishop Blake and his wife, lovingly known as Lady Mae, were celebrated during the Sunday, June 10th morning service. Elder Tyrone Potts spoke passionately about Bishop Blake’s unprecedented tenure at West Angeles Church of God in Christ (see video) https://vimeo.com/151352355

No one could have predicted that Blake would grow the West Angeles congregation from 50 people, with annual revenue of $12,000.00, into a Super Mega Church and the largest COGIC church within the denomination. “A mega church pastor was not always a mega church pastor. But possibly the reason that he became so is because he effectively utilized all resources available to further his community and people and thus, people were drawn to his ministry and vision,” said Blake.

Under the leadership of Blake, West Angeles Church of God in Christ is considered one of the largest and well-respected churches in the country. West Angeles’ contributions to the improvement of the Los Angeles community is commended on the local, state and national levels. Bishop Blake was appointed to President Obama’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.
Influential Los Angeles pastor Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr. will give Biola University’s 2015 fall commencement address at the undergraduate and graduate ceremonies on Dec. 19. In addition, Blake will receive an honorary Doctorate of Divinity degree from Biola for his extensive work as a pastor demonstrating an unwavering commitment in obedience to the Word of God.

“Bishop Charles Blake is highly regarded as a leader of leaders. His ministry has impacted millions, and he preaches and teaches the Word of God uncompromisingly,” said Biola President Barry H. Corey. “Bishop Blake has demonstrated a commitment to the ideals we cherish in Christian higher education, and he exemplifies the Gospel through his wide influence throughout the city of Los Angeles and his leadership across the world.”

Blake is the pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ in Los Angeles, Calif. — one of the country’s largest megachurches with more than 25,000 members. He is the presiding bishop of the entire Church of God in Christ denomination, which boasts nearly 6.5 million members from more than 60 countries worldwide.

“It has been a great joy to serve as the presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ for eight years and the pastor of West Angeles

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BISHOP CHARLES E. BLAKE SR. TO RECEIVE HONORARY DOCTORATE FROM BIOLA UNIVERSITY

On December 18, 2015, Bishop Charles E. Blake was awarded an honorary doctorate of divinity degree by Biola University
Church for 46 years,” said Blake. “I appreciate [Biola University’s] recognition of the work I’ve accomplished in assisting others through the Word of God and my call to ministry. Luke 12:48 says ‘to whom much is given, from him much will be required.’ I am compelled by this honor to pursue even greater service to my Lord and master, Jesus.”

West Angeles Church of God in Christ is sometimes called “the church to the stars” due to its geographical location and attendees like Denzel Washington, Stevie Wonder, and Samuel and LaTanya Jackson. Described as a “man of great integrity” by Washington, Blake humbly uses his platform to give back to the local and international community. West Angeles has established more than 400 housing and commercial properties for the inner city of Los Angeles and Blake has assisted thousands of Los Angeles County residents by implementing various educational, financial and social programs. Furthermore, Blake founded and is president of the Pan African Children’s Fund (PACF) organization. “Save Africa’s Children,” a program within PACF, supports more than 420 orphan care programs, 200,000 children and 24 nations throughout sub-Saharan Africa.
LOS ANGELES - Dec. 4, 2015 - PRLog -- West Angeles Church of God in Christ (West Angeles), one of the largest church memberships in the Country, hosts its annual Christmas concert as a means to give back to the Los Angeles community. A Christmas at the Cathedral is a free annual event held at West Angeles' newly constructed cathedral in Los Angeles on Sunday, December 13, 2015 at 7 p.m.

This is the 10th year anniversary for the event. West Angeles, under the leadership of Bishop Charles Blake, spares no expense in bringing the best gospel talent to the community. Past artists have included Grammy Awarding winners; Fred Hammond, Yolanda Adams, Kirk Franklin, Donnie McClurkin. Gladys Ross, COO of West Angeles says, “This event is for the entire community to enjoy. Many families can’t afford to attend concerts with top artists, so we want to give this gift to everyone. It’s a great way for family and friends to spend the day together - for free.”

This year’s guests include: chart-topping, Tasha Cobbs; Anthony Brown & Group Therapy and world-renowned, West Angeles Church of God in Christ Mass Choir. The evening of music and theatrical productions will be hosted by award-winning comedian, George Wallace.

“West Angeles Church of God in Christ is committed in its efforts to bring the best available resources to our community in the form of housing, medical facilities, supermarket, banking and youth services. We also want to bring joy, laughter and peace to a community that is oftentimes struggling in so many ways,” said Bishop Blake.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INAUGURATION, WHITE HOUSE APPOINTMENT & HISTORIC MOVE IN ONLY 9 DAYS

COGIC Presiding Bishop at forefront of momentous events for denomination

(April 22, 2009 – Memphis, TENN) The Church Of God In Christ (COGIC) has experienced significant changes that will affect the entire denomination and its leadership in the last nine days: an announcement from the White House, the official installation of its 7th Chief Apostle and the vote by the General Assembly to move the Holy Convocation from Memphis after nearly 102 years.

On April 6th in Washington, D.C., President Barack Obama tapped Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake to serve on his 25-person White House Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. On Monday, April 13th in Memphis, TN, the denomination officially installed Blake at Temple of Deliverance during a sacred traditional ceremony with thousands of fellow COGIC denomination leaders, members and supporters present. One day later on April 14th, the General Assembly of the Church voted to move the Holy Convocation in 2010 to an undisclosed location due to cost issues and proximity challenges for its members. And on Wednesday, April 15th, the Church concluded April Call Meeting with an Inaugural Banquet in honor of Blake that included star-studded sponsors and guests like Denzel Washington and Angela Bassett, who are both members of West Angeles, where Bishop Blake is senior pastor in Los Angeles, California.

“We have to be ready to meet the demands of this changing world,” said Blake of the recent events. “It is imperative for us to advocate for the saints of the denomination during these tough economic times. We must also have an opportunity to voice our concerns about important social issues that test our faith, and we must hold true to traditions that remind us of our sacred covenant with God.”

Blake will serve for one year on the White House Advisory Council and will serve for four years as Presiding Bishop of COGIC before the next quadrennial election.

About Bishop Charles E. Blake
Bishop Charles E. Blake serves as the Seventh Presiding Bishop of the 6.5 million-member Church Of God In Christ. He is the pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ with a membership of over 24,000. West Angeles has been recognized as one of the fastest growing churches in the nation, with extensive ministry and outreach services including television and radio broadcasts. West Angeles is deeply involved in providing not only for the spiritual life of its people, but also it provides more than 80 programs for the psychological, social, and economic enhancement of the community. As founder and CEO of Save Africa's Children, Bishop Blake oversees the support of more than 200,000 children, in 400 orphan care programs, throughout more than 23 nations on the continent of Africa. Blake was a speaker at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado during the first ever Inter-Faith Gathering, where he endorsed President Obama and confirmed his status as a pro-life democrat.

About the Church Of God In Christ
The Church Of God In Christ is the fourth-largest Protestant religious denomination in the United States with an estimated membership of more than 6.5 million members. COGIC headquarters are located at Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee.
I am pleased to send warm greetings as you dedicate West Angeles Cathedral. This event provides a great opportunity for your congregation to tour your new building, rejoice in your accomplishments, and make plans for the future.

The celebration of faith is central to the lives of Americans. Your place of worship plays an important role in your community and State. I commend you for your hard work and dedication in meeting the needs of area residents and for striving to share your ministry programs with local individuals and families.

May your community continue to grow in faith and friendship. Also, may the love that you share with others be a reflection of the common values we all share. Laura joins me in sending best wishes on this special occasion.

[signature]
When you are in the throes of doing what is right for righteousness’ sake, little time is taken to appreciate or envision the historical imprint your actions may have on the country. You don’t stop to ponder how your actions will alter the course of your life.

In college, I found myself watching and reading about events that were being characterized as civil resistance and civil disobedience. I often went to God in prayer to ask how I could be an instrument of change in what was happening in Alabama at the time. I didn’t realize then that the civil rights movement would become so richly commemorated and celebrated during Black History Month.

It is crucial to continue to remember not only those days, but all the ideas and events that have shaped the history of African Americans and our nation. And none is more important than this: the place of God in all of it.

In 1976, as part of the United States bicentennial, President Gerald R. Ford officially recognized Black History Month, calling upon America to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.”

Long before President Ford’s official recognition of Black History Month in 1976, African American, Harvard-trained historian Carter G. Woodson and prominent, African American minister Jesse E. Moorland founded an organization, known today as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). The ASALH was dedicated to researching and

GOD’S PLACE IN BLACK HISTORY

Looking to the past provides direction for the current fight for justice.
Bishop Charles Blake/ FEBRUARY 12, 2016
promoting achievements by black Americans. The organization sponsored the first national Negro History Week in 1926, selecting the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, February 12 and February 14, respectively.

Woodson said, "If a race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated..."

By the late 1960s, thanks in no small part to the civil rights movement and a growing awareness and pride in black heritage, Negro History Week had evolved into Black History Month.

The nonviolent protests and movements of today are inspired by the strategies of the civil rights movement. Despite the separation of decades, I see great similarities in the cries for justice and against police brutality. What is obviously different today is this: the civil rights movement was visibly God-centric in its motivational speeches; there were many calls for prayer and appeals to the biblical justification of the movement.

In his famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” written April 16, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, “Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire.”

As I look at the genesis of the African American and note our heroic journey traveled as a people—through enslavement, oppression, rejection and segregation—the greatest constant, on the path to the freedoms enjoyed today, was the presence of God-loving, God-fearing, and God-worshiping men and women.
A capacity crowd filled the West Angeles Cathedral on July 31 to celebrate the 75th birthday of the Right Rev. Charles E. Blake, presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ denomination and pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ in Los Angeles.

As a testament to the tremendous impact of his ministry, the audience included prominent clergy, elected officials, community leaders and thousands of members of West Angeles as well as other churches.

The celebration included a keynote address by Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church, and featured music by gospel recording artists Smokie Norful and Judith McAllister, as well as the West Angeles Mass Choir and Saddleback Church Choir.

Participants included Earvin 'Magic' and Cookie Johnson, Samuel and Latanya Jackson, L.A. County Supervisor Mark Ridley Thomas, Bishop P.A. Brooks, Apostle Frederick and Dr. Betty Price, Bishop Kenneth Ulmer, recording artist Stevie Wonder, Mother Willie Mae Rivers, and Mother Barbara McCoo Lewis.

“It was an illustrious, glorious and most beautiful evening,” said Earl Jordan, West Angeles spokesman.

“In addition to it being a very distinguished hallmark birthday for Bishop Blake, it is also represented a milestone in the life of his ministry that will trigger the start of a major funding drive to secure the future ministry legacy of West Angeles Church. The drive will culminate in 2019, which spotlights his 50th pastoral anniversary at the church.

“Bishop Blake’s vision is to pay off the remaining mortgage of the West Angeles Cathedral, consolidate all of the church’s properties onto one campus by building a Family Life Center and provide an endowment of future legacy resources for the church,” explained Jordan.

“His goal is to leave a stable, future ministry legacy for the community, strengthen the fiber of the church’s outreach to men, women, children, and families in the community, and to further impact the nation and world for Jesus Christ.”
Los Angeles is known around the world as home to the rich and famous. Professional sports fans have no shortage of local teams to cheer on and shoppers enjoy one of the most famous streets in the world, Rodeo Drive, to flex their credit card muscle. The beaches are filled with beautiful people with beautiful bodies and eclectic characters strolling the boardwalks. Los Angeles has become a must stop for presidential candidates looking to raise millions while rubbing elbows with A-List celebrities and deep pocket supporters. In fact, over 27 million visitors stop through Los Angeles annually. Very often, on the list of “things to do” is the name “West Angeles Church of God is Christ.”

West Angeles Church of God in Christ (West Angeles) is one of the countries largest mega churches and boasts a membership of over 25,000. Its cathedral is a Sixty-Five Million Dollar ($65,000,000.00) architectural masterpiece with a 5,000 seat sanctuary. It’s sometimes called “the church to the stars” because members Denzel and Pauletta Washington, Samuel and LaTanya Jackson, Magic Erving and Cookie Johnson, Courtney Vance & wife, Angela Bassett and Stevie Wonder, are just a few of the famous faces that regularly fill the pews. On Sundays, a Grammy Award winning choir, consisting of over 100 voices, uplifts the congregation with hymns, old popular Gospel songs and new contemporary spiritual hits. The worship is lively and energetic — typical of a Pentecostal church West Angeles staffs more than 200 paid employees and operates a Community Development Corporation (CDC) that the University of Southern California “designated the #1 CDC Organization in Los Angeles County. Since 1969, West Angeles has been led by Bishop Charles Blake and his wife of 47 years, Mae Lawrence Blake.

In light of the fact that a mega church is typically a congregational body of over 2,000 members, West Angeles would be considered a mega church on steroids — a Super Mega Church. The burning debate is whether the mega and Super Mega churches are properly using their power and prestige for the good of their community, or abusing that power and prestige for selfish, personal gains. Bishop Blake professes an agreement with the scripture to “whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” Blake states, “The capacity of a mega church, if it is committed to the good and advancement of people, and to its true mandate, it can serve and provide resources and exert positive influence at a level that it could not, if it were not a mega church with a strong structure, and organizational strength.”
Charles Blake is one of the most influential people in Los Angeles; one of the most prominent pastors in America; and now, the Presiding Bishop of the entire Church of God in Christ (COGIC) denomination, which is estimated at having over seven million members worldwide. He is a very powerful man who appears somewhat oblivious to his domestic and international stature. Blake is a Super Mega pastor with name recognition comparable to recent Oprah Winfrey interviewees, Joel Osteen and T.D. Jakes. Yet, he purposely limits his media exposure except to further a church-based initiative. Denzel Washington once said, “Bishop Charles Blake is my pastor, mentor and a man of great integrity.” Having spoken to members, community residents and other pastors, Washington’s sentiments are shared by many.

In contrast, some mega pastors egos have grown larger than their congregations. In the ‘80s, a few Super Mega pastors found themselves in Super Mega trouble. Jimmy Swaggart had a penchant for prostitutes and Jim Bakker was convicted of fraud and spent five years in jail. More recently, Creflo Dollar found himself posing for a mug shot for allegedly abusing his teenage daughter while beating her with a shoe. Even worse, Eddie Long made headlines for allegedly participating in sexual relationships with several young men. Yet, when I sat with Bishop Blake to discuss the power a Super Mega church yields, the upcoming election and the state of religion in American, it was glaringly obvious that he is a man consumed, if not obsessed, with serving his church, denomination and community with intelligence and integrity. I think Hell would freeze over before Bishop Blake was the subject of a salacious headline for doing something unethical, indecent and “unclegy-like.”

Blake preached his first sermon while a junior in high school. He’s the son of a pastor and therefore, he has been insulated with religious doctrine all of his life. Consequently, his path to pastor a church was almost predestined. However, no one, except the God Blake has preached about for over 50 years, could have known that he would grow the West Angeles congregation from 50 people, with annual revenue of $12,000.00, into a Super Mega Church and the largest COGIC church within the
A mega church pastor was not always a mega church pastor. But possibly the reason that he became so is because he effectively utilized all resources available to further his community and people and thus, people were drawn to his ministry and vision,” said Blake. West Angeles has developed over 400 units of housing and commercial property in the inner city of Los Angeles. It has initiated and implemented scores of civic, social, financial and educational programs that have assisted thousands of congregants and Los Angeles County residents. Bishop Blake founded an international outreach ministry called Save Africa’s Children, wherein, he is the Chief Executive Officer. Save Africa’s Children, with assistance from West Angeles, has provided financial resources, food and housing to over 200,000 children in 400 foster care programs in Africa and Haiti. “The primary benefit of a mega church is that it has resources to initiate programs that are conceived for the work for the advancement of the church.”

Every four years, leading up to our country’s hotly contested presidential elections, Super Mega pastors could theoretically exert their influence on millions of worshipers. However, due to a 1954 tax reform act, commonly termed the “Johnson amendment,” all tax-exempt organizations are banned from supporting or opposing political candidates. This amendment has been challenged as unconstitutional because many argue that it infringes upon a pastor’s First Amendment rights of free speech. However, Blake is very comfortable, and agrees with the limited political influence pastors should have.

Legally, constitutionally, the church cannot and should not exert influence over the outcome of elections and individuals involved in elections. Morally and from a humane perspective, the church should take positions on issues the impact people; the poor, disfranchised, those who can not speak loudly for themselves either because of lack of resources or lack of access. We don’t take partisan or political positions nor do we endorse individuals. I agree with such a philosophy of operation, in terms of our nation. However, the church can educate people and encourage people, to participate in the electoral process.

In 2009, Blake was asked to serve on President Obama’s 25-person White House Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. He explained his appointment was “to advise and implement programs that had to do with the ecumenical community regarding churches of every denomination in their relationship with service of our nation as it relates to the White House.” He was quick to assert, that despite his being a registered democrat who is pro-life, he would be pleased to serve in a future ecumenical capacity no matter who is in the white house. “If my schedule permitted it, and I felt that it was an opportunity to be of service, I would be overjoyed to serve no matter who was in the white house because I think we should serve” he stated.

With the 25 thousand members and up to 50,000 online weekly participants, it is no surprise that lobbyists, activists, political talking heads and mainstream corporate executives vie for Blake’s endorsement of their cause, candidate, initiative or product. However, he does not condone the use of the pulpit as a mega pastor’s personal “soapbox.” He rarely uses his weekly platform to side with, or oppose stories that race the ticker, lead the evening news or trend on Twitter.

I don’t think that the pastor or the church is obligated or responsible for taking a position and articulating a position on every issue. We represent, to the best of our capacity, what we feel that our God would require us to do and say
in the context of our community. Yet, every once in awhile an issue rises to the level of potentially contributing to the good or ill of our society; or an issue rises in relationship to, and connection with, those things that are most sacred to us and to what we conceive to be the Will of God. Consequently, on occasion, it is mandatory for the church to speak out and articulate its position on an issue that is before society and before our nation.

Statistics suggest that the American society is moving away from structured religion, yet Blake is optimistic. He states, "As society proceeds — I can't always say 'progresses' — there is at many levels, less of a focus on spiritual development, values morals relating towards God. But for those of us who know and feel that God is an unavoidable reality that we cannot conceive or explain life on earth without referencing to a higher being with out reference to God. We feel that it is not a hopeless battle." Many people who believe in God don't believe in attending Church. They opine that churches are filled with hypocrites as members and judgmental leaders who ostracize non-conforming visitors. Blake believes that a mega church, because of its vast outreach, has a responsibility to open its doors and expand its level of acceptance to everyone.

At West Angeles, we love everybody and God loves everybody and to approach anyone from a perspective other than that of love, compassion, concern, desire to lift and desire to help would be an inappropriate approach. Jesus shared wisdom, truth and knowledge. He shared His power, His good influence with everyone He met so the church should do so also...The church joins with all who seek to do good and to help and lift humanity. We are strong in our conviction that Jesus Christ was a unique person on the Earth and because of that we are very faithful and committed to our
convictions regarding Him and feel that we found truth within. Nevertheless, that does not mean that we deprive others of what they would think or feel is their truth. That is their privilege.

Mega pastors have become easy targets for opponents who question their financial worth in leading and managing multimillion dollar corporations, albeit, a church. Some Super Mega pastors have personal annual incomes that exceed a million dollars ($1,000,000). Bishop Blake’s salary is approximated at $227,750, which is below his corporate counterparts. As the leader of West Angeles, Presiding Bishop of COGIC and CEO of Save Africa’s Children, Blake works over 80 hours most weeks, including preaching two to three services every Sunday. He receives no compensation for his work with Save Africa’s Children.

Blake explained that for many years he was grossly underpaid, nevertheless, he and “Lady Mae” worked tirelessly because of their love for God, the church and the community. “More than once I’ve contributed an entire salary back to the church. As one expected to lead in the giving, whatever the pastor receives, sometimes, a greater portion of it goes back into the church” he declared. In fact, it was only after a bank’s stipulation that required Blake to remain as pastor of West Angeles during the life of the loan, did Blake receive a significant raise. A CPA firm was retained to valuate an equitable compensation package for an executive with Blake attributes and responsibilities. Consequently, in 2001, Blake accepted a package that was still 1/3 less than was recommended. According to his son, Elder Charles Blake Jr., most years, despite the enormous wealth and generous spirit of some of the members, Bishop Blake is the leading financial contributor to West Angeles. “In order to be credible, the pastor needs to lead the congregation in contributing and thus, must himself be on the frontline and cutting edge in giving.”

The jury is still out as to whether mega churches are good for our society or not. As a culture, we have learned that bigger isn’t always better and sometimes less is more. Mega churches do have responsibilities to their communities, state and nation. Few would disagree about the super mega work that West Angeles Church of God in Christ has done in the Los Angeles community. Consequently, when mega churches are fulfilling their social responsibilities, Thomas Jefferson’s “wall of separation between church and state” should always remained blurred.

Correction: A previous version of this post incorrectly stated that Bishop Blake’s salary is approximated at $900,000. It is actually approximated at $227,750.
Washington – President Barack Obama today announced additional members of the President’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. The Advisory Council is part of the White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and is composed of religious and secular leaders and scholars from different backgrounds.

Each member of the Council is appointed to a one-year term. The members of the Council are:

Diane Baillargeon, President & CEO, Seedco, New York, NY

*Anju Bhargava, Founder, Asian Indian Women of America, New Jersey

*Bishop Charles Blake, Presiding Bishop, Church of God in Christ, Los Angeles, CA

Noel Castellanos, CEO, Christian Community Development Association, Chicago, IL

*The Rev. Peg Chemberlin, President-Elect, National Council of Churches USA, Minneapolis, MN

Dr. Arturo Chavez, President & CEO, Mexican American Catholic College, San Antonio, TX

Fred Davie, Senior Adviser, Public/Private Ventures New York, NY

*Nathan Diament, Director of Public Policy, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, Washington, DC

Pastor Joel C. Hunter, Senior Pastor, Northland, a Church Distributed, Longwood, FL

*Harry Knox, Director, Religion and Faith Program, Human Rights Campaign, Washington, DC

Bishop Vashti M. McKenzie, Presiding Bishop, 13th Episcopal District, African Methodist Episcopal, Church, Knoxville, TN

*Dalia Mogahed, Executive Director, Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, Washington, DC

Rev. Otis Moss, Jr., Pastor emeritus, Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, Cleveland, OH

Dr. Frank S. Page, President emeritus, Southern Baptist Convention, Taylors, SC

Eboo S. Patel, Founder & Executive Director, Interfaith Youth Core, Chicago, IL

*Anthony Picarello, General Counsel, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC
*Nancy Ratzan, National President, National Council of Jewish Women, Miami, FL

Melissa Rogers, Director, Wake Forest School of Divinity Center for Religion and Public Affairs, Winston-Salem, NC

Rabbi David N. Saperstein, Director & Counsel, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, Washington, DC

Dr. William J. Shaw, President, National Baptist Convention, USA, Philadelphia, PA

Father Larry J. Snyder, President, Catholic Charities USA, Alexandria, VA

Richard Stearns, President, World Vision, Bellevue, WA

Judith N. Vredenburgh, President and Chief Executive Officer, Big Brothers / Big Sisters of America, Philadelphia, PA

Rev. Jim Wallis, President & Executive Director, Sojourners, Washington, DC

*Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Indianapolis, IN

NOTE: Members marked with an asterisk were announced today. The White House Office for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships will be a resource for nonprofits and community organizations, both secular and faith based, looking for ways to make a bigger impact in their communities, learn their obligations under the law, cut through red tape, and make the most of what the federal government has to offer. Other members of the Advisory Council were announced earlier this year.
BISHOP
CHARLES E. BLAKE
Presiding Bishop, Church of God In Christ

The man stepping out of the shiny black Lincoln Navigator had just been told that there was a problem in the multimillion-dollar cathedral he had built to spread the Word to the 24,000 saints of West Angeles Church of God in Christ in Los Angeles.

Due to a power outage the house was dark. But anointed folks often have ways of turning darkness into light, and before Bishop Charles E. Blake could even get the 4-1-1 on what was happening, he was told that the issue had been resolved. There would be light. And that's a good thing because as the newly appointed International Presiding Bishop of the Church of God in Christ, Inc. (COGIC)—succeeding the late Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson—Blake's light is shining brighter than ever as the Church approaches its centennial celebration this year.

And it was already pretty bright. The Little Rock native pastors the largest COGIC congregation in the United States, has authored several books and is also CEO and founder of Save Africa's Children, an organization that has raised more than $6 million to assist AIDS orphans in Africa. But Blake, who has been married to Mae L. Blake for 42 years and has three children and six grandchildren, doesn't think he'll be spreading himself too thinly because he's mastered the art of delegation. That doesn't mean, however, there won't be challenges in his new position.

"It represents both challenges and wonderful opportunities," says Blake, who served as COGIC's first vice president under Patterson for six years. "There are challenges globally that our world confronts that the church needs to speak to. There are challenges in terms of managing and overseeing an organization as complex as the Church of God in Christ. We're now in 58 nations. We are the Church of God, but we're made up of human beings, and all of the challenges that a human organization faces, we face... But our faith is in an infinite and omnipotent God who will enable us to confront those challenges as they occur."

Blake has the daunting task of succeeding one of the country's most dynamic, respected and beloved Christian leaders—who was also his friend for nearly 50 years. "To observe his example and model of leadership was a most educational dimension of our relationship," Blake says. "I can never duplicate or match the wonderful accomplishments that he made, but in the same spirit of leadership and excellence, I intend to walk." And shine.

—Miki Turner
Charles Blake
Presiding Bishop, Church of God in Christ
by PRESTON LAUTERBACH

MEMBERS OF THE locally based Church of God in Christ (COGIC, Inc.) converge on Memphis November 5-12 for their annual holy convocation. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the gathering, and the first for Charles Blake as presiding bishop. Following the death of Memphian G.E. Patterson on March 20th, Blake was named spiritual leader and CEO of the world’s largest African-American Pentecostal denomination. He pastors the largest African-American church west of the Mississippi River, West Angeles COGIC in Los Angeles, California, which he founded in 1969. Blake served as Patterson’s right-hand man since 2000, and received the Harvard Foundation Humanitarian of the Year medal in 2003 for his Pan African Children’s Fund and Save Africa’s Children program.

How is Memphis Important to COGIC?
Memphis is our Jerusalem, our Mecca. It’s the place around which we gather. Memphis is where our church was organized. It’s where our founding bishop [Charles Mason] lived, and where our headquarters office and main temple are located.

What distinguishes COGIC from other denominations?
We are, in many ways, the mother organization of Pentecostalism, which is the fastest growing religious movement in the world. Our churches are usually located in the heart of the city. When other churches have moved to the suburbs, we have remained in the heart of the city, administering to the needs of inner-city dwellers.

Tell me about the job of presiding bishop.
I function much like the CEO of any major corporation. It’s just a matter of overseeing the resources and officers of the church in such a way that our operation is orderly and effective. Spiritually, the presiding bishop focuses on the moral lives of the members of the church, and the moral lives we would seek for the world to follow. It’s also a primary mission to win as many souls as we can.

What did you learn from working with Bishop Patterson?
We have known one another since the 1950s. We conducted revivals together as young ministers. I was very impressed by his leadership. He contributed progressive organizational leadership, and at the same time he had great respect for the traditions and practices of the church. I would hope to walk in that same spirit of leadership.

How do you think you’ll leave your mark on COGIC?
Every leader does so. The church is always impacted by its leadership. At the same time, the church has a life and a culture all its own. Leaders must respect that culture, and understand that they might not have a transforming impact. I heard a president say that he was both the most powerful man on earth, and impressed with how powerless he actually was. I’m sure that I’ll make some differences, but I’m not convinced that I’m so great that I’ll make the church something that it’s never been before. Digital ministry is a high priority. It’s unthinkable that we wouldn’t try to minister to the world and educate our constituents with digital technology.

Why does the world need the Holyness-Pentecostal message?
All the problems in the country today — juvenile delinquency, children having children, divorce — these are all things that the church attempts to eradicate from society. Of course you might say it doesn’t seem very successful, and in many ways that may seem to be true. On the other hand, we have to see how much worse things could be. The millions of people who are involved in the church may do what the church is advocating, and if so, some of these problems are less intense were it not for the church.

What are your thoughts on charismatic television ministers?
It’s impossible to give a generalization of my impression of them considering how many there are. Those who preach the Word and those who believe in the Bible, and who operate with integrity, I love them and praise God for them.

Are there thoughts of moving the convocation from Memphis?
Not at this time.
Standing as tall as he can, 7-year-old Darius Russell proudly hands over the check he has flown thousands of miles from Los Angeles to deliver. The $600 take from his lemonade stand now belongs to Lazarus Project, an orphanage in Lusaka, Zambia. “Doctors said I’d never have a child,” says Darius’s mother, Yolanda. “Since God gave me one, I told Him this family will now look after other children.”

The Russells have come to Africa with other families from their Los Angeles church to put into practice the teachings of their pastor, Bishop Charles Blake. From his pulpit at the West Angeles Church of God in Christ—a congregation of 22,000 faithful, including some of the most famous names in Hollywood (see box)—Blake is the driving force behind Save Africa’s Children, a program he started in 2001 to secure futures for the more than 12 million African youths who have lost a parent in the AIDS pandemic. “African-Americans must be for Africa what Jewish-Americans have been for Israel,” he says.

Blake’s call for action is hitting home: Donors to his cause have given more than $4 million to 320 facilities for orphans in Africa, and last summer Blake and 40 congregants toured a dozen such sites in Zambia, South Africa and Kenya. “After my mother died, I was abandoned,” 15-year-old Kosiya Pakali tells Bishop Charles Blake soothes an abandoned infant found on the streets of Lusaka, Zambia.

SAVE AFRICA’S KIDS NOW

Bishop Charles Blake tells his Los Angeles flock: Time to save the children
PRESIDENT SAYS HE’S RESPONSIBLE IN STORM LAPSES

By ELISABETH BUMILLER and RICHARD W. STEVENSON - September 14, 2005

WASHINGTON, Sept. 13 - President Bush said on Tuesday that he bore responsibility for any failures of the federal government in its response to Hurricane Katrina and suggested that he was unsure whether the country was adequately prepared for another catastrophic storm or terrorist attack.

"Katrina exposed serious problems in our response capability at all levels of government, and to the extent that the federal government didn't fully do its job right, I take responsibility," Mr. Bush said in an appearance in the East Room with President Jalal Talabani of Iraq. "I want to know what went right and what went wrong."

In response to a reporter who asked if Americans, in the wake of the hurricane, should be concerned about the government's ability to respond to another disaster or a terrorist attack, Mr. Bush said: "I want to know how to better cooperate with state and local government, to be able to answer that very question that you asked: Are we capable of dealing with a severe attack or another severe storm? And that's a very important question."

Throughout his nearly five years in office, Mr. Bush has resisted publicly acknowledging mistakes or shortcomings, and his willingness in this case to edge up to a buck-stops-here statement, however conditional, was evidence of how shaken his presidency has been by the political fallout from the government's handling of the storm.

It also set the stage for a White House effort to pivot from dealing with urgent rescue and relief efforts to setting out a vision of how the federal government could help rebuild devastated communities and re-establish Mr. Bush's image as a leader.

The White House said Mr. Bush would address the nation from Louisiana on Thursday night, during the president's fourth trip to the region since the hurricane and his first major speech on the disaster. On Friday, which he has designated a national day of prayer and remembrance, he is planning to speak at the Washington National Cathedral in the morning, and T.D. Jakes, a conservative African-American television evangelist, is scheduled to deliver the sermon with some evacuees from New Orleans in attendance.

Even as Mr. Bush traveled to New York on Tuesday afternoon to begin a round of meetings with world leaders gathering at the United Nations, White House officials were weighing policy proposals and working on drafts of the speech that Mr. Bush will give Thursday. Administration officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss proposals that have yet to be decided on, said Mr. Bush was likely to set out a broad commitment to rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, with a particular focus on housing.

The storm has so commanded the attention of the White House and of Washington that Mr. Bush's remarks on the hurricane overshadowed his news conference with Mr. Talabani, which on a normal day would have been a major event about a conflict that has come to define his presidency. In the news conference, Mr. Bush warned Syria that it would become "more and more isolated" if it did not stop the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq and reveal whether it has an intelligence presence or some other one in Lebanon.
As he prepares a blueprint to respond to the storm damage and to spend the billions of dollars that doing so will cost, Mr. Bush is confronting the likelihood that the rest of his agenda will have to be put on hold until next year.

A Republican ally of Mr. Bush who has been briefed on the administration's thinking said the White House's hope for the rest of this year was to deal with the hurricane and to win confirmation for Judge John G. Roberts Jr. as chief justice of the United States and for a second nominee, not yet selected, to the Supreme Court seat being vacated by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Next year, the ally said, Mr. Bush would return to issues like overhauling the tax code and the immigration laws that he had hoped to get a start on this year.

After the outcry over scenes of poor, black victims of the hurricane suffering and dying in New Orleans, White House officials continued on Tuesday to try to shore up support among the president’s conservative African-American supporters, who have not all rallied to his side. Bishop Charles E. Blake of the West Angeles Church of God in Christ in Los Angeles, a major African-American supporter of Mr. Bush, said this week that he had declined an invitation to meet on Sept. 6 at the White House with Mr. Bush, black leaders and charitable organizations because he was too busy.

"It's a four-hour flight, it's a $2,000 ticket, I do have heavy responsibilities here," Bishop Blake said in a telephone interview.

Asked if the government’s response to the hurricane had changed the way he felt about Mr. Bush, Bishop Blake responded: "I cannot say at this time. I'm holding the issue open until I can understand the dynamics involved and the delays that have been experienced."

In saying he took responsibility for any failures of the federal response to the storm, Mr. Bush stopped short of acknowledging that he or anyone else had made mistakes. The president has in the past resisted efforts to draw him out about errors in judgment and regrets.

At a news conference in April 2004, he was asked what his biggest mistake had been, and he responded that he was sure he had made some but that he was unable, on the spot, to say what they were. Asked again about mistakes during one of his debates last year with Senator John Kerry, Mr. Bush admitted to having made some bad personnel choices.

In his remarks in the East Room on Tuesday, Mr. Bush distinguished between criticizing the way the government responded to the hurricane and the way individuals responded.

The president said that having been down to the Gulf Coast three times, "I'm not going to defend the process going in, but I am going to defend the people who are on the front line of saving lives."

"Those Coast Guard kids pulling people out of the floods did heroic work," he said. "The first responders on the ground, whether they be state folks or local folks, did everything they could."
When Bishop Gilbert Patterson began his sermon at the Temple of Deliverance church in Memphis one recent Sunday, his voice started off soft and velvety. He compared the struggles of Israel’s King David to the trials of today’s youth who are besieged by drugs and violence. “You are engaged in spiritual warfare,” he told them, his voice now rising and his finger jabbing toward heaven. “But the same God that delivered you yesterday... is going to stand up for you and deliver you from all the plots that Satan will put in front of you.” By the end, Patterson was stomping, clutching the air, roaring verses as a keyboardist accompanied him. Calls of “Hallelujah!” and “Come on, Bishop!” erupted from the thousands of ecstatic souls quivering in the sanctuary. “If [God] has anointed you,” Patterson belted out in near song, “you’ve got to walk in that anointing until you finally get to your purpose!”

Patterson, 65, has certainly found his purpose. Starting with 436 people in a cramped old Baptist church 30 years ago, he has built Temple of Deliverance into a nearly 17,000-member congregation—one of the fastest-growing in the country. Last year, he was re-elected as presiding bishop of the Memphis-based Church of God in Christ (COGIC, of which Temple of Deliverance is a part), the largest Pentecostal denomination in the United States and a growing international force, with churches in 54 countries, from Jamaica to Japan. Patterson “is probably the most important voice of black Pentecostalism in the world,” says Vinson Synan, dean of the school of divinity at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Va.

Part of Patterson’s appeal: his moral rigor. As he sees it, signs of social depravity abound, from gangs to gay marriage (though he sides with President George W. Bush on moral issues, he’s a vehement opponent of the Iraq war and a staunch supporter of programs like affirmative action). “People are totally confused,” Patterson says, “and they keep looking for something that they can believe is real and something that will keep them grounded.” That “something” is Scripture, whose teachings Patterson has emphasized more than past presiding bishops. He “has restored a level of spirituality and Biblical focus that the denomination had somewhat lost over the last several decades,” says Bishop Charles Blake, head of a large COGIC congregation in Los Angeles that includes celebrities like Denzel Washington. That’s a welcome change for church member Dolores Allen, 53. “I love his preaching and teaching,” she says. “It strengthens me to be rooted in the word of God.”

Another of the church’s draws: the exuberant Pentecostal worship style. Congregants speak in tongues—unintelligible bursts of Spirit-filled babble—cry out for miracles and dance in the aisles as a 21-piece orchestra and 100-member choir swell the Memphis temple with soul-stirring song.

Patterson is as gifted a businessman as he is a preacher. Back when he founded Temple of Deliverance in 1975—after having broken from COGIC over a family rift—he wooed congregants with a mailing list and a radio audience he had amassed over the years. Early on, he recognized the power of TV, marketing videotapes of his sermons when the local stations wouldn’t sell air time to a black church. Since reconciling with COGIC and rejoining in 1988, he has disseminated the denomination’s message through a TV ministry that now airs on Black Entertainment Television and Trinity Broadcasting Network. He also bought a Memphis radio station and started a record label that has produced a Grammy-nominated album. With money raised from tithes—the church’s primary source of income—Patterson built Temple of Deliverance’s 5,000-seat sanctuary and has been buying land downtown for COGIC. “He has brought an air of efficiency and organization and administration to the life of the denomination,” says Bishop Blake. Ask Patterson what’s next and he replies, with a laugh, “My mind now is more focused on trying to retire”—if the church lets him, that is.
While his party protested the new presidency, Bishop Charles E. Blake saw a field of opportunities. Bishop Blake, pastor of the West Angeles Church of God in Christ in Los Angeles, is a lifelong Democrat and civil rights activist.

But as he watched the continued protest over the disputed Florida ballots that secured the White House for George W. Bush, Bishop Blake found himself at odds with his historical allies. "What good does protesting do now?" he asked. "It would be a horrible mistake for black people to say, as some have said, 'We don't recognize him, he's not legitimate.' If you refuse to deal with him, the resources at his disposal will be given to others."

The Rev. Eugene Rivers, pastor of the Azusa Christian Community, a small Pentecostal church and community center in Boston, was more blunt. "Right now," he said, "it's really coming down to the black preachers versus the black Democrats."

Mr. Rivers, 50, and Bishop Blake, 60, have organized a small group of African-American ministers, mostly Democrats, who are now seeking friendlier relations with the Republican Party. Mr. Rivers says the pastors are trying to distance themselves from what he calls "a declining civil rights industry," although Bishop Blake emphasizes that the ministers "have not taken any kind of adversarial approach toward any of our liberal friends."

But Bishop Blake and Mr. Rivers argue that Mr. Bush's poor showing among African-American voters opened doors for leverage, not partisan confrontation. "Black people need more than catharsis to survive in this world," Mr. Rivers said.

The two men were among about 20 black ministers who met with Mr. Bush in late December. On Jan. 22, they issued a pastoral letter, signed by 24 members of the clergy and lay people, seeking support on a list of issues, from African relief to universal health care.

In mollifying prose, they wrote that it was "important not to inflame the debate over cabinet nominees over facile charges of racism" -- a deliberate contrast to the positions of the Congressional Black Caucus and civil rights figures like the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Al Sharpton.

Bishop Blake brings formidable numbers to the fray. The West Angeles Church of God in Christ has about 18,000 members, ranging from the poor of South-Central Los Angeles to celebrities like Magic Johnson, Stevie Wonder and Angela Bassett. The church has annual revenue of about $16 million and runs 80 community projects, including building low-cost housing and a prison ministry. Its new $60 million cathedral, being finished on Crenshaw Boulevard, could house a hockey arena.

Bishop Blake has fought with Democrats and civil rights advocates before, notably over his support for school vouchers.

Mr. Rivers said the ministers in the group represent a new generation of leaders, not forged in the civil rights struggles of the 1950's and 1960's, who will challenge what he called "the acknowledged gatekeepers." He criticized the Congressional Black Caucus and civil rights leaders for not accomplishing more during the Clinton administration, including failure to block the 1996 welfare bill.

"Clinton learned that black votes came cheap," Mr. Rivers said.

Prominent Democrats rejected the notion of a split

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SOME BLACK PASTORS SEE NEW AID UNDER BUSH

By JOHN LELAND Published: February 2, 2001
between the caucus and black pastors.

"No way does it open up a rift," said Representative Maxine Waters, Democrat of California. "The overwhelming number of African-American ministers are progressive and have a civil rights background."

Major organizations like the Congress of National Black Churches have not lent their support to the new group. Mr. Rivers and Bishop Blake concede that ministers in their group make up a small portion of African-American pastors. But they benefit from the longtime friendship between Mr. Rivers and John J. DiIulio Jr., whom President Bush named this week to head the first federal office to promote the integration of religious groups into federally financed social services.

"He and I are joined at the hip dispositionally on the Philly thing," said Mr. Rivers, who, like Mr. Dilulio, grew up in Philadelphia. "He's an Italian sub and I'm a cheese steak."

The new federal office has brought to the fore a number of ministers who serve poor constituencies but are not usually outspoken on political issues. Attendance at African-American churches has shifted toward Pentecostal and evangelical denominations, away from the mainline churches that incubated the civil rights movement. Ministers of the evangelical churches, though predominantly Democrats, often differ with the party's positions on a number of social issues, including school vouchers, abortion, gay rights and sex education.

"Because the faith community has been silent, we've allowed civil activists like the Congressional Black Caucus to speak for an entire group," said the Rev. Matthew Brown, 37, pastor of the Pentecostal Temple, Church of God in Christ in Buffalo, and one of the signers of the letter. "Now faith leaders are saying we have a voice, we don't want civil activists to speak on behalf of the faith community."

The rise of these ministers represents a historical throwback, said Manning Marable, director of African-American Studies at Columbia University and author of "Black Leadership" (Columbia University Press, 1998). In the early part of the century, ministers were the acknowledged leaders both inside and outside their communities. But with the rise of the black middle class and African-American elected officials, Mr. Marable said, "these elites supplanted the old ministers." He described the current foment as "an end-run around these elites."

The Rev. Floyd Flake, a former member of the Congressional Black Caucus who is pastor at the 13,000-member Allen African Methodist Episcopal Cathedral in Jamaica, Queens, said the future lay in an accommodation between church and state. The type of ministers led by Bishop Blake, he said, will grow in both stature and their demands. Mr. Flake did not sign the Jan. 22 pastoral letter and has not aligned himself with Bishop Blake's group.

As megachurches like his or Bishop Blake's become more politically active, Mr. Flake said, they will constitute a power bloc outside the political parties. "Young people go out into a work force that's much different from the 60's and 70's," he said. "They're coming back without allegiance to Democrats or Republicans. You'll see more of that crowd voting for Republicans in some instances, Democrats in others."

Kweisi Mfume, president of the N.A.A.C.P., also played down any friction between black ministers and the historical black leadership. But Mr. Mfume said the ministers called attention to a problem between the Democrats and a core constituency.

"The Democratic Party has taken black voters for granted," Mr. Mfume said. "The black vote is up for grabs."

Photo: Bishop Charles E. Blake of Los Angeles is a leader a group trying to work with the Bush administration. (Monica Almeida/The New York Times)
Church Of God In Christ
Bishop Charles E. Blake
Receives L.A. Urban League’s Whitney M. Young Award

Bishop Charles E. Blake, pastor of the West Angeles Church of God in Christ, reportedly the largest Black church in California, was recently honored as recipient of the 27th Annual Whitney M. Young Award given by the Los Angeles Urban League.

At the black-tie gala attended by 1,700 at the posh Century Plaza Hotel that featured Smokey Robinson as the evening’s entertainment, Blake was presented the award by John W. Mack, president of the organization.

More than 16,000 members worship at West Angeles and Blake, assisted by pledges from Earvin "Magic" Johnson and Denzel Washington, is in the midst of constructing a new facility for the region’s fast-growing membership. The renowned religious leader was honored by the organization for his philanthropic efforts and community outreach programs.

In presenting the Whitney M. Young Award, whose name sake served as executive director of the National Urban League from 1961 until his death in 1971, Mack called Blake “a modern-day prophet for the new millennium.

"He is recognized both nationally and internationally for his superb leadership that brings together the religious and secular worlds for the betterment of all humankind," Mack said.
Bishop Charles E. Blake was recently elected presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) for a full four-year term during the recent Convocation in Memphis.

Blake had served the remaining term of the late Bishop G.E. Patterson, who died of heart failure last year (Jet, April 9).

More than 3,800 delegates voted in the recent election.

“This convocation has truly been blessed,” said Blake. “We have had a wonderful turnout despite the many economic hardships that our members have encountered, and this time of planning and rejuvenation has yielded prosperous fruit in the form of very competent leadership ready to work for the denomination and the glory of the Lord.”

Bishop Joel Harley Lyles was re-elected as general secretary; Bishop Samuel Lowe was re-elected as treasurer and Pastor Frank A. White was elected as the new financial secretary. Fifteen people were elected to the Trustee Board.

Blake is the pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ in Los Angeles, with a membership of 24,000.

The Church of God in Christ, headquartered at the Mason Temple in Memphis, is the fourth largest Protestant religious denomination in the United States with an estimated membership of more than 6.5 million and is the largest African-American Pentecostal religious denomination in the world.

—Clarence Waldron
bishop, businessman, builder

How Charles E. Blake transformed a tiny church into one of the largest congregations in America and a force of benevolent change in South-Central.

By Martin Bouse
Man of His Word
L.A. Bishop's Thriving Church Focuses on Needs of Urban Dweller

By RUSSELL CHANDLER
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Inside the massive sanctuary of West Angeles Church of God in Christ, Bishop Charles Edward Blake is warmed to the thundering climax of his third sermon this Sunday morning. Outside, a long line of the faithful waits to swarm into the pews as soon as the white-gloved ushers open the doors for the fourth service. It is standing room only—again.

With more than 8,000 members, Blake's Crenshaw, district
Charles Blake and the Saints of West Angeles
In Los Angeles—where the Azusa Revival began—Blake’s church keeps Pentecostal fires burning
I recently had the privilege of honoring one of America’s great pastors – a wonderful co-worker in ministry, a powerful force for good in the city of Los Angeles, and dear friend of mine. Bishop Charles Blake has pastored West Angeles Church in the heart of L.A. for forty-six years! That’s what you call “putting down roots” in a congregation and city. There aren’t many pastors who’ve cared for one congregation for that long. (One of my 6 mentors served his church in Dallas for 50 years.)

A big reason why many churches are plateaued and declining is because they change leaders every few years. There’s no way a church can grow healthy and strong if the office of the pastor has a revolving door. What would happen to a family that got a new daddy every 3 or 4 years? The children would have massive trust issues from not knowing who they count on, and all kinds of emotional wounds, including a fear of abandonment, poor self-esteem, and a suspicious attitude in every relationships. When so many pastors move around every few years (or they are forced to move by their denomination) it’s no wonder many churches are weakened by conflict, cliques, gossip, and distrust.

Usually in a church, the first year for a new pastor is the “honeymoon” – everybody tries to get along and be happy. (Actually it’s not really a honeymoon, just suspended judgment!) The second year for new pastor, he starts to be criticized by people who don’t like his new direction for the church. The seven last words of the church are “We’ve never done it that way before!”

By the third or fourth year, somebody has to leave... either the pastor leaves, or those who are dissatisfied leave. From 35 years of coaching pastors and mediating
church conflicts between members and their pastors, I’ve seen this over and over: When the pastor leaves, the problems stay. (They’re left for the next poor pastor to deal with.) But if the pastor stays, the problems leave. Either the problem is eventually solved, or the problem-creators move to another church. It’s sad that one study showed that the average pastor gives up and leaves because of 7 vocal critics.

When I planted Saddleback Church 35 years ago, I made a public commitment to our first members to stay as their pastor – through thick and thin – for 40 years. God willing, I intend to keep that commitment. It has not always been easy. I’ve wanted to resign on many Monday mornings. But like my marriage vow, I made a commitment to God that I do not take lightly.

Looking back, and then looking at all the good Saddleback has accomplished around the world, I’m grateful that I never gave up on my calling or the vision God gave me, or the precious people he placed under my care and leadership (1 Peter 5:1-3, Heb. 13:17). But I’m even more grateful that God never gave up on me, because I’m not the same man I was when Kay and I started the church 35 years ago. While the church was growing, God was growing me.

God is a systematic God. He created the solar system. The Animal Kingdom and Plant Kingdom are systems in a finely balanced environment. Your body is a collection of systems – digestive, respiratory, nervous, skeletal, circulatory, and other systems. Just as God designed your body to function around nine systems, the Body of Christ, the church, is designed to function around 5 biblical systems.

While pastoring Saddleback, it’s also been my privilege to assist and train other pastors in setting up the biblical systems of fellowship, worship, discipleship, service, and evangelism. At last count, I’ve served over 440,000 pastors from 164 countries. In every training program, I’ve told pastors the same thing: I can teach you the personal character (Psalm 78:72), the biblical purposes (Matt. 22:37-40 & Matt. 28:19-20), the New Testament structure (Acts 5:42), and the necessary skills (Eccl 10:10), that will grow a congregation, but I cannot teach you how to do it quickly!

To grow something strong and healthy takes time. When God wants to make a mushroom he takes 6 hours but when he wants to make an oak tree, he takes 60 years. So here’s the question: Do you want your church to be a mushroom or an oak tree? If you want it to last, you can’t grow it fast. True discipleship takes time.

One thing that I’m not a fan of are published lists of the “fastest growing churches.” They reinforce short-term thinking. But strength, not speed, is what matters. No one cares how long it took Michelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel. What matters is its lasting beauty. Fast-growing churches don’t impress me. I could teach you a dozen ways to attract a crowd fast, but a crowd is not a church!

What impresses me are the number of disciples in small group fellowship, active with the spiritual habits, serving in ministry, and being sent out on mission. You judge the strength of a church not by its seating capacity but by its sending capacity. Yes, we’ve baptized over 42,000 adult believers, but just as importantly, Saddleback Church has over 40,000 studying the Bible each week in small groups, over 27,000 members serving in what we call bi-vocational ministries, and has sent 24,869 of our member to serve overseas in 197 countries. You can’t do any of that quickly!

You have to stay put and be patient. There are instant crowds, but no instant churches, and attendance is only one of a dozen vital signs of a healthy congregation.

There are too many advantages and benefits of staying in one place for ministry than I have space to mention in this post. But here’s one benefit I’ve witnessed over and over: When you lead with love and integrity, your ministry gets better every year. But if you don’t lead with love and integrity, it gets worse and more difficult every year. You can pretend to love people for a few years, but you can’t fake love for 35 years! The people figure out if you are legit, because there is never a moment when they aren’t watching you, and testing your credibility.
If you are a leader, people are constantly doing a “credit check” on you before they invest themselves. People want to know 1) Does my pastor love me? 2) Does he practice what he preaches? and 3) Does he lead by example, making the first sacrifice? The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. And if a pastor does that humbly and consistently year after year after year, the people will follow you anywhere... even if it means charging hell with squirt guns!

I don’t have space to explain the background and reasons, but one time the members of Saddleback church voted unanimously by anonymous ballot to purchase a $13 million dollar piece of property – without knowing the purchase price, because I had said two words: “Trust me.” Of course I would not have even attempted to suggest that in the early years of Saddleback. But after a 20 year track record of love, sacrifice, wise decisions, and a willingness to own up to my mistakes and weaknesses, I had earned their trust.

Bishop Charles Blake is that kind of leader. For 48 years he has been able to impact Los Angeles in ways no other pastor I know has because he stayed put! In 1 Timothy 1:12, Paul said “I thank God for putting me into the ministry.” Ministry is received, not achieved. It is a gift of God’s grace. And if God puts you into ministry, then must stay put, until he announces other plans for you!

And if you’re a pastor who could use some fresh perspective and encouraging coaching for your church, this November 10–13, I’m going to teach an invitation-only, four-day intensive called New Hope For Your Church. I’m going to share everything I’ve learned about pastoring since I wrote The Purpose Driven Church twenty years ago. I’ll share the mistakes I made (so you can avoid them), the lessons I’ve learned the hard way, and most important of all, the biblical steps to revitalizing a plateaued or declining church.

Rick Warren is the founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., one of America’s largest and most influential churches. Rick is author of the New York Times bestseller The Purpose Driven Life. His book, The Purpose Driven Church, was named one of the 100 Christian books that changed the 20th century. He is also founder of Pastors.com, a global Internet community for pastors.