



Newsletter

SPRING
2023





REGISTRATION GUIDE

SAMUEL DEWITT PROCTOR CONFERENCE, INC.
2023 CLERGY & LAY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
Monday, February 20 – Thursday, February 23, 2023
Pre-Conference Events: TBA
Hilton Atlanta | Atlanta, Georgia

WHERE FUTURE MEETS LEGACY
THEOETHICS · AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY · AFROFUTURISM
“One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.”
Psalm 145:4 NRSV

www.sdpcconference.info



Strive to be More Christlike

– Brother Dan Reagans

This year’s Proctor Conference in Atlanta Georgia was phenomenal. Never have I seen such a religious based, inclusive community of young black progressives. One of the overwhelming themes I walked away with from the conference was to have reverence for the sacrifices our ancestors made that paved the way for this generation today. Their efforts cannot be in vain. From education, to politics, to agriculture - we must reclaim and sustain our seats at the table (the American Dream).

In addition, the black church and community should strive to be more “Christ-like” in every aspect of the term. We must do everything in our power to not discriminate against any groups of people (Youth/LGBTQ/Disabled) because we ALL fall short of Christ’s glory. Divisiveness and success don’t go together.

“If you want to go fast go alone, but if you want to go far go together.”



Health and Medical Disparities

– Sister Connie Land

This was my first Proctor Conference and I was not disappointed. The conference was well organized and informative. There were general sessions and individual workshops. During this conference, emphasis was placed on the future generation learning from those who have paved the way. So much more work is needed but there's enough interest from the future generation to carry the torch.

One of the individual workshops I attended was: Health and Medical Disparities. This session focused on the impact of COVID 19 vaccines and HIV Aids on the ethnic minority community. The impact revealed the health inequities and disparities and the resulting lack of trust from people of color. Because of the lack of trust, people of color are left out of clinical trials. Why the lack of trust? Go back in time and look at past medical experimentations and practices on blacks often brutal and unethical, e.g., Tuskegee Syphilis Study. How can people of color be included in clinical trial studies? Inclusion is necessary to know the impact on the multiple underlying health conditions affecting the ethnic minority community but not others.

What are ways the church can address the lack of trust?

- Education and awareness. Meet them where they are (i.e. beauty/barber shops, nail salons)
- Most churches have Health Education Ministries that sponsor health fairs annually. These are great but the information and services need to be ongoing
- Use social media for individuals to communicate their needs (i.e. transportation, child care)
- Talk to legislators

The key is to get the word out using people who look like them and that they are most likely to trust.

Our church is doing a lot but much more is needed. We need to shift the way we do things and reach out farther to meet the needs of the greater community.

Thankful for the opportunity to attend the conference and learn. Looking forward to the next one.

Theoethics: A Paradigm Shift

– Rev. Jesse Land

My first Proctor Conference was educational, informative and useful while in seminary now. There were general sessions, church service, and individual workshops. To partake a church service at the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church with future and legacy notable speakers (Rev. Dr. Brandon Crowley and Rev. Dr. Teresa Lynn Fry Brown) was a highlight of the conference. A bonus with Senator Raphael Warnock in attendance and speaking.

I was “awe struck” to be in the presence of so many notable theologians, professors and other scholars who are on the battlefield doing the work to keep social justice and the relationship of Jesus Christ in the limelight. They're working with so many young people for the work to continue. Such a great example fitting for the conference theme.

Now to one of the sessions I attended:
Theoethics: A Paradigm Shift

This session focused on the church, where we are, what needs to change for church survival. Church membership is on the decline. What is the future generation looking for in church and how can we reach them and keep them? The fire that is burning now is not enough to yield future attendance. Look at ways that attracts young people to church and keep them there. Look at your church format and make

necessary changes. Re-envision the church using technology, sermons that speaks to the future generation, ministries and programs that interest them. Future generation relates to technology and this area is key. Have space that is welcoming to them. Be inclusive.

During the conference, I learned a lot that is useful in my seminary studies. Thanking God for the opportunity to attend. Looking forward to next year's conference.

Proctor Conference Worship Experience

– Sister Sherrell Sneed



I was grateful to have the opportunity to attend the 2023 Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference. My soul was overjoyed, and my spirit was filled from the beginning of the conference until the end. It was absolutely incredible.

I wanted to take this time and reflect on the opening worship service. What a blessing it was to my spirit. It was held at the world-renowned Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta GA. We were blessed to have several prophetic ministers in the sanctuary. The Rev. Dr. Frederick Haynes, Rev. Dr. Judge Penny Brown Reynolds, Rev. Dr. Raphael Warnock, Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright, and many others.

This worship experience set the tone for the entire week. And, although the hour grew late as we worshipped into the evening, I felt like I could continue all through the night and into the next morning. That's just how wonderful and God filled the experience was for me.

The sermon topic was titled, "Sanctified Succession". I felt the topic was particularly on point with the conference theme of Where Future Meets Legacy. The Rev. Dr. Teresa Frye Brown and Rev. Dr. Brandon Thomas Crowley gave us The Word in a tag team duo presentation. It was amazing! The preaching text came from 2 Timothy.

As they delivered the sermon, I pondered the Word and was reminded about how Paul poured into Timothy, (his spiritual son). Dr. Crowley reminded us that "Paul always pushed Timothy to the forth-front equipping, encouraging, empowering and enriching him". We are charged with passing the torch of leadership so the teachings of the Word may live on and not die. Paul and Timothy are prime examples of what happens when the future forms a relationship with legacy. We should all strive to be futurist and pour legacy into the next generation.

Rev. Dr. Brown raised the question, "Where is our theological faith-based estate planning? When was the last time that we moved to ensure that our ideas, our activism and our ministries continue when we vacate the premises? What are our replacement strategies?"

This conference and especially, this worship experience, lit a fire in me. Who is my Paul? Who is my Timothy? Father God, I have some work to do.



The Black Church in the Future

– Minister Demetrius Burnett

In the workshop, “Afrofuturism: Black Futures and Black Faith,” I learned that the underlying statement of Afrofuturism as a framework is, “Black people exist in the future.” It’s a simple statement that may seem obvious, but is also quite radical. As we discussed different forms of media, writing, and film that depicts any type of future or alternate reality, we reflected on how many fictional alternate and future realities don’t imagine Black people in it. If we are there, Black people show up in limited roles and in limited representation of the different “types” of Black people who make up our community (male, female, LGBTQ+, smart, athletic, etc.). Whether that future imagines more advanced forms of our present struggles, or finally resolves our struggles with new technologies that help create an equitable and just future, the way Black people exist in these futures quite literally lies in the eye of the beholder.

As I reflected on this, I realized that even in the imaginations of Black people, the Black Church rarely exists in the future. Whether as an institution or gathering of people without a building, I cannot recall a television show, movie, book, or anything with a future reality that includes the Black Church. It makes me wonder - do we even see ourselves as the Black Church in the future? Regardless of the answer, I think this question invites us into a

form of Afrofuturism. A call to ask ourselves - what does the Black Church in the Future look like? Furthermore, what does it need to look like to make God’s Kingdom, the Beloved Community, real on Earth as it is in Heaven. It’s a call to imagine the Church and its people without the ailments that plague us, the “-isms” that exclude God’s people from full participation in the church community and society, the obstructions to Liberation, and all that hinders us from being the Church God desires. Once we have that vision of the Black Church of the Future, we pursue it! We pursue in submission to God, and in submission to the process of becoming that is necessary to evolve into the Black Church that God reveals and we’ve seen in that newly imagined future.

Thank you again for your support in me attending Proctor. It was a wonderful experience.





Liberation Theologies Focus Group

– Rev. Theophous H. Reagans

The youth and young adult members of Allen Temple Baptist Church Global Ministries and young adult members in South Africa present

● **Black Liberation Theology Through the Lens of Dr. Allan Boesak**

July 23, 2022 10:00 am to 11:30 am (PST)
7:00 pm to 8:30 pm (SAST)

Allen Temple Baptist Church

8501 International Blvd, Oakland, CA, 94621

LUNCH SERVED

*To join the discussion on Zoom [CLICK HERE](#)



One of Africa's most respected theologians, Tinyiko Maluleke, has called Allan Boesak "our Martin Luther King and James Cone rolled into one." As preacher, prophet, pastor, theologian, ecumenist, author, political and human rights activist for many years, Allan Aubrey Boesak represents perhaps the clearest picture of a truly organic theologian. It is through the lens of his work and experiences that young adults will discuss the resilience of black liberation theology and its continued application to today's social justice issues.

The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation, looking for salvation. This presents challenges to the Black church. Queer folk, disabled folk, undocumented folk, ex-offenders, and women (treated equally) have not been welcomed into the fold except on the condition that they would know and stay in their places; that they would strive to be more like the "normative" community; and that they would downplay their differences.

This call is also a rallying call for police reform, against gun violence and the continued killing of black children and all children. Can liberating theologies equip and encourage us in our advocating for social justice? So much of our social progress in the past has been built on evolving theological understanding. Continued theological inquiry on the part of our current generation of social progress activists may help to continue this tradition of theological and social progress moving in tandem and supporting each other. This is a way to continue the work of "groaning toward perfection" that cannot be done except in partnership with God.



The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation, looking for salvation. This presents challenges to the Black church. This is a particular problem for marginalized groups, like women, members of the LGBTQ community, the African American community, immigrant communities, and others. Queer folk, disabled folk, undocumented folk, ex-offenders, and women (treated equally) have not been welcomed into the fold except on the condition that they would know and stay in their places; that they would strive to be more like the "normative" heterosexual community; and that they would downplay their differences. These conditions are unacceptable to the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Accordingly, if the church is to join in with and support this movement, which is very attractive to our young would-be members, the church must find a meaningful way to come to terms with this expansive, inclusive view of community and all of God's children. And not only because it might grow our churches, but because it might be where God is leading us! Thus, we need to find ways of affirming this expansive and inclusive view of community biblically and theologically.

The limited view of who is welcome in the Kingdom of God and the limited presence in

contemporary justice roles of public witness begs the question of whether some of our church leaders have misunderstood or misappropriated the radically resistant and liberation purpose that Jesus affirmed as an incarnational mission: "To bring good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18, NRSV). Jesus, the rabbinic teacher, identified his own missional charge to serve the marginalized, as found in the prophetic tradition in Isaiah 61. The question now becomes, can our churches be heralds of change, obedient to Jesus's radical gospel praxis of incarnated justice and strive for equitable justice? This is the challenge the church faces from our youth. Can those of us who serve, be obedient to Jesus's praxis of incarnated justice both in our religious and secular roles? Can we devote our efforts and help to forge change in cities stagnated by conditions of oppression? Liberation theology helps us in this moment because it reminds us of Jesus's radical missional charge to serve the marginalized; to serve humankind.

We hope to encourage millennials, Christian pastors, leaders, and practitioners to integrate public witness, that is a faith-informed commitment to social justice into their own vocational roles of justice leadership. In some

instances, church leaders in many of our churches seem to be aware of the escalating racial and sexist tensions in our cities caused by increased oppression and systemic racism, yet they do not seem to connect these disparities to the struggles we faced in the sixties and seventies, nor do they seek strategies to confront them. We hope to motivate both young activists and religious leaders to connect with the church's responsibility to confront these issues of injustice and to embrace roles of public witness in and through a faith-informed commitment to justice.

I prepared the materials to be used by the participants prior to the focus groups. I identified and summarized the key aspects of the Black Liberation Theology, Womanist Theology, and Queer Liberation Theology. I identified the moderators for the focus groups and potential participants. I developed some of the questions and scripts to guide the discussions.

We recruited some young adult participants and so far have conducted two focus groups. The first session introduced Black Liberation Theology through the lens of Dr. Allan Boesak, a South African activist and theologian. During that first session, Dr. Boesak discussed how Black Liberation Theology responds to the dynamics of the Black Lives Movement. Young adults from the USA and RSA participated in the session. The participants from the USA attended in person and by Zoom. Thirty-five people participated in total. We filmed the discussion.

As teacher, Boesak told us that liberation theologies relate to and ground our social justice efforts, including the Black Lives Matter

Movement. This is so because reducing police violence, stopping violence against women and LGBTQ persons, ending war—is, indeed, the work of the gospel. Liberation theologies/the gospel remind us that God is on the side of the poor and the oppressed, struggling alongside us in our efforts to address the social justice issues of the day. Boesak spoke specifically about patriarchy and oppressive treatment of women and members of the LGBTQ community, encouraging a minister from South Africa, and all of us, to respect the rights of our sisters—to advocate for the rights of our sisters and other marginalized members of our community rather than support tradition and the legacy of our elders who endorsed and perpetrated unequal treatment of women and LGBTQ persons. He reminded us that we (the church) have no right to decide and decree who God loves, that is, we have no authority to exclude those who are different from us (queer folk, disabled folk, undocumented folk, ex-offenders, and women) from the family of God, or to mandate different roles for them in the church and community. Boesak said that he believes like Niebuhr, that real political change requires a willingness on our part to get our hands dirty and work in the public/political arena (and indeed such work is theological). Reading James Cone will not end patriarchy in our churches or society, any more than it will reduce police violence. But Cones' black liberation theology, if understood and embraced, and other liberation theologies, should inspire us to protest injustice and work alongside others (activists, politicians, etc.) to mitigate it (and even end oppression), and should inspire us to stand against unequal treatment of women and LGBTQ persons to mitigate it and end it.





Boesak also talked about the importance of continuing to teach critical race theory. He said we shouldn't be deterred by white Americans' efforts to prevent our teaching of CRT in local school systems. He encouraged us to continue teaching CRT from our local autonomous institutions, like the Black Church. He stressed the significance of continuing this truth telling so that our youth are informed and so that we continue to reflect on and take action directed at racist structures that need to be dismantled.

We conducted a survey following the session to get a sense of the impact of the dialogue. Eight participants responded to the survey questions. The survey included six questions.

1. **Following the talk with Dr. Boesak do you believe that black liberation theology is relevant to the Black Lives Matter Movement? If yes, how? Five participants responded yes to question one.**

One participant said "it's central to the Black Lives Matter Movement and the Black Church's ability to engage authentically. BLM calls us to the most vulnerable and marginalized in our community and advocates for a world that works for them...A spiritual rootedness is necessary in the fight."

One participant said: "Yes, Black Liberation Theology is at the heart of any movement which is birthed out of social injustices that we find prevalent in our societies."

Another participant responded: "I think it is extremely relevant to BLM. Perhaps not in a way of subscribing to one specific religion but it does in regard to the desire to achieve

true equality for people of African descent worldwide."

Another participant said: "Yes, Both focus on the liberation of African and African American people from social, political and economic injustice in white society."

2. **During the focus group, it was mentioned that there are some important issues that young people are concerned about. What are some of those issues and can liberation theologies help you address them? Explain. Six participants responded to this question.**

One participant responded: "LGBTQ+ inclusion, and even centering, in our movement comes to mind. Living at the intersection of Black, woman or gender non-conforming, and queer is one of the most marginalized positions in our society. Yet, Black queen women started BLM and continue to be major leaders in the movement. Liberation theology has helped me see you can't want liberation for Black people and not mean ALL Black people."

Another participant responded: "Contemporary Liberation Theologies who say and model that ALL black lives matter would be truly disappointed and rightly judgmental. It is appalling to claim liberation for some blacks and not for others. That it is not an expression of the character or the will of God."

One participant responded: "Absolutely. Prior to this discussion I was not able to rectify Christianity and acceptance of bondage (slavery) in my mind. Learning about early apartheid activists using "guerrilla tactics" to

teach and study Christianity (and the Bible) in its true form unfiltered and free of colonial perversion, was extremely encouraging. Recognizing the hypocrisy of “Christian” colonizers/slave owners and learning that religion can be weaponized was enlightening.”

3. Feel free to reflect on and note any significant lessons learned from the focus group discussion. Six participants responded to question three.

Another participant reported: “It was encouraging to learn Dr. Boesak’s views and willingness to point out the internal flaws in the black church that needed to be addressed. He was able to do this with intellectual class and in a respectful manner. In my own personal experience, I’ve been used to seeing the older generation either stuck in their ways or be progressive in one area (usually something that suits them) but on the other hand want to remain conservative in other areas. His open mindedness and ability to remain objective to multi-generational concerns was refreshing.”

Generally, participants expressed a belief that God is an inclusive God who is concerned about the welfare of many who have been excluded from and oppressed by the church, including the Black church and traditional Christians. They expressed a feeling of empowerment after seeing God in a new light as a liberating and loving God. Participants also reported a greater appreciation for their role in helping and advocating for marginalized communities. In sum, participants’ responses provide strong support for the notion that introducing young Black Christians to the principles of Black Liberation Theology can

empower young Christians to do the work—to partner with God and help transform society into a more just and compassionate place for us all. This supports our belief that an understanding of liberation theologies does in fact encourage young adult Christians in their social justice advocacy and with integrating their faith into that work.

Stay tuned for the release of the film “BLM and Liberation Theology Through the Lens of Allan Boesak”.

Award for Global Ministries

For the past 30 years, Rev. Eric Huckle (’73) has helped coordinate disbursement of these scholarships. The Hawkinson Fund provides scholarships to students who have shown outstanding commitment to Peace and Justice. Since its inception, five UTS students have received these awards including: Nancy Anderson (1989); Casey Vanderbent (1998); Mathew Bersagel-Braley (2003); Leslie Ball (2005); and Karen Van Fossan (2012). This year, DMin student Rev. Theophous Reagans will receive this prestigious scholarship.

Rev. J. Alfred Smith, Sr., Pastor Emeritus Allen Temple Baptist Church and Professor Emeritus Berkeley School of Theology says of Theophous: “I dare say that few black churches are actually engaging in a continuing ministry

of service to youth and young adults in the U.S. and in Africa, teaching them to work for social justice under the banner of Black Liberation theology. I applaud his quiet, unassuming leadership, that seeks no recognition or publicity but simply seeks to be obedient to God’s call, commission, and claim on his life. This ministry is not missionary paternalism rather, it is a healthy bilateral partnership.”

Rev. Cindi Beth Johnson, Vice President of Advancement at United Theological Seminary says: “United congratulates Rev. Theophous Reagans on this award and for the important ministry he is doing. And we are grateful for alums like Rev. Eric Huckle and organizations like the Hawkinson Fund for Peace and Justice who provide financial support for our students.”



Global Ministries Brunch

On April 15th, Global Ministries hosted a brunch for members and supporters. We enjoyed great food, fellowship and music by gospel artist Charlene Moore. Our young adults (Rev. Alexandria Spearman and Minister Demetrius Burnett) reported on their experiences at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference and gave insightful commentaries on “Afrofuturism:

Black Futures and Black Faith,” the theme of the 2023 Proctor Conference. This was the first brunch since the pandemic and we really had a wonderful time, made some plans for future activities and recommitted to our mission to engage in cultural exchange and to provide charity and support to our brothers and sisters around the globe who need help.



Global Ministries Brunch



April 15, 2023 11:00 am to 2:00 pm
565 Bellevue Avenue—Park Bellevue Tower
Oakland, CA

- 11:00 am Sparkling Reception
- 12:00 pm Film Screening – Tiffany Littlejohn
- 12:15 pm Brunch Served
 - Fried Fish
 - Sausages (Beef & Turkey)
 - Homemade Southern Grits
 - Homestyle Potatoes
 - Scrambled Eggs
 - Hot Buttered Biscuits
 - Assortment of Fresh Fruit
 - Cake
 - Juice, Coffee, & Tea

- 1:00 pm Proctor Conference Report Back
- 1:30 pm Music

***RSVP required by April 8**

Paid parking available in the park. Enter at the entrance to Fairyland and drive toward the building to park on Bellevue.





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