



RECONCILIATION REPORT

Right Now, I Feel Alright

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Inside this issue:

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| I Feel Alright | 2-3 |
| AfAm Mission Seminar | 3 |
| Mission Trips 2008 | 4 |
| Prayer & Praise | 4 |

RMNI's MOST WANTED

Wanted: African American missionaries currently serving, or intending to serve for at least two years in cross-cultural missions.

We're taking a census of these pioneers. Please let us know who and where they are by emailing Jim@RMNI.org

Thank you!

Several years ago I mentioned the omission of global missions in the budgets of three African American churches in Chattanooga, Tenn. Recently I received the proposed 2008 budget of over \$220,000 for another African American church. Here are a few line items:

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|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Salaries: | \$128,000 (57%) | |
| Benevolence: | \$5000 | |
| Machine lease: | \$4200 | |
| Gifts, funerals, flowers: | \$4000 | |
| Conventions/conferences: | \$4000 | |
| Kitchen: | \$3000 | |
| Recreation: | \$3000 | |
| Waste disposal: | \$2800 | Missions, local or global: \$ 0 |

There is no budget allocation for Christian education literature. Garbage is more important than global or local evangelism. The similarity of this church to a religious club or co-op is unavoidable. A co-op is owned by the members, existing for the benefit of its members. However, Jesus said, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10,NIV). "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

The Church's commission is to make disciples of people from all nations (Matt. 28-18-20). The opposite operational concept of Church is coming to a service. If a Christian tithes, loudly praises God, supports the service on Sunday and Wednesday and travels with the church as she visits other churches— is that true religion? Is belonging to a guild or board or choir, and going to Sunday School definitely true religion? You could attend innumerable services and die, thinking that that was all there was-- going to church, supporting the services. Recently a soloist "showed out" her version of "Right Now, I Feel Alright." If you've spent countless days in the pews, forgetting the local unchurched and the 1.8 billion who have never heard of Christ—will you feel alright at the Judgment?

The choir or praise team is tasked with making the church feel alright. Choral groups are far more important than the church missions committee, if there is one. Feeling good seems to be more important than the good of the lost. Larry Crabb has noted,

Right Now, I Feel Alright

we believe that we're entitled to feel happy (*Shattered Dreams*, 2001, p. 152). It seems that it's our spiritual birthright to feel good all of the time.

Many black churches don't pursue those who don't come to church, or won't hear their broadcasted church service, squeezed in among other broadcasted services. Exceptions include Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Chattanooga, which is leading two or three mission trips to Haiti this year, and supports about twenty missionaries, and Church of the First Born, which serves homeless men.

Christians tend to focus upon some valid characteristic of the Way and to magnify it. For some it's peace (shalom), or justice, or helping the poor, or community development, or high-energy praise and worship (getting happy), or liturgy, or prayer, or wellbeing (morphed into prosperity and positive thinking), or the authority of the Church, or one of the Persons of the Trinity, or stewardship, or evangelism. The Church is not to be equated entirely with any of the above, including mission, but the Church must be on mission, or it is Club or Co-op. Such that recreation, conventions, the copy machine, and garbage are far more important than people going to hell. Do you "feel me?" We may need a place to feel alright, and right now we may feel alright, but how will we feel when after a long time, our master returns and settles accounts with us for the funds He entrusted to us (Matthew 25:19). As this budget illustrates, the Black church has money. To borrow a black pastor's phrase, this church is "locked down on every dollar." Where our treasure is, there is our heart (Matthew 6:21). The budget is a CT scan of a church's heart. What is the condition of the heart of your church, as reflected in her budget?

African Americans were projected to have earned 799 billion dollars in 2006, expected to rise to \$1.1 trillion in 2011 (Jeffrey M. Humphreys, "The Multicultural Economy 2006," from the Selig Center of the University of Georgia). There may be as many as 500 African American missionaries. Ghana sends 500 missionaries per year. Her population is 22.1 million and her Gross National Income is 10 billion. African Americans, who now number 38 million, spent 10.7 billion on household furnishings and equipment in 2004. Nigeria sends 2500 missionaries per year and has a Gross National Income of 74.2 billion dollars. African Americans spent this much on vehicles, insurance, clothing and gifts in 2004 (World Christian Database, the World Bank, and Target Market News). Why are the Ghanaian and Nigerian churches far more concerned with missions than are African Americans? Perhaps African Americans, now enjoying material prosperity for the first time--certainly compared with West Africans--are experiencing what is described in Mark 4:18-19 "Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful."

The few African American missionaries go primarily to Africa. The greatest needs in Africa are spiritual. When the spiritual foundations of a nation are biblical, and when citizens respect the rule of law, then business and economies of all scales can grow without the poisoned atmosphere of corruption. When African leaders care more about pleasing God than gaining and keeping power, there will not be national chaos. African American missionaries can bring to the nations not only the Gospel, but their unique sensitivity to injustice, and their victory over oppression (according to George Smith, African American missionary to Uganda), together with a skin color that opens doors only cracked to whites. Going requires financial sacrifice not only by missionaries, but by those sending missionaries. We may have to delete the \$3000 for recreation and skip some conferences. The desire for other things seduces us to into self-indulgent comfort and lures us into staying within the joyful security of the *sanctuary*, where the choir makes us feel alright. A praise leader recently said, "When I think of all God's blessings, it makes me want to shout!"—OK, but an inexpensive response. "He died for us. He deserves a handclap of praise!" While well-meant, if we're failing to sacrifice for the global Kingdom, this

sounds flatly sacrilegious. He deserves our life, which will lead us out of the sanctuary to help the lost, most of whom do not feel alright.

Crabb added that when we subordinate our happiness for God's greater purposes, we will eventually feel joy in that self-sacrifice (*Shattered Dreams*, p. 154). Right now, we may not feel alright, because service in the Kingdom may involve inconvenience and pain. Dr. Michael Johnson watched his wife Kay give away her car, crystal glasses, linens, gold-plated flatware, fine china, her new bedroom suite and many wedding presents, since they would not need them in Africa. But he did not see her cry (*Making the Lame Man Blind*, p. 67-68). She considered them as "rubbish" to "gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8, NIV).

Jim Sutherland

[For a guide to construct a church budget see www.rmni.org/financial/ChurchBudgeting.pdf]

African American Missions Seminar, Columbia International University, Jan. 17-19, 2008. Look for the next seminar planned for Jan. 2009 at



Dr. Steve Strauss, US Director of the mission agency SIM, in an act of repentance for his mission's discrimination against African American missionary applicants in the 1950s. African American missionary Phillip Nelson recruits such applicants for SIM today.



Missionary to islands on Lake Victoria, Uganda, George Smith describes the singularity of African American missionaries in a seminar on the unique contributions African Americans in missions.



Rev. David Cornelius, African American Mobilization Consultant, with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, leading the seminar also addressed by George Smith, above.



Surgeon Dr. Michael Johnson spoke on "Divine Dissatisfaction." He and his wife Kay plan to return to Kenya in April. You can find his presentation at www.rmni.org/PowerPoints/Johnson_DivineDissatisfaction/Johnson_DivineDissatisfaction.html

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Mobilizing the African American Church for Global Mission

www.RMNI.org

Southern Sudan/ Uganda Ministry, June 2008

- 1. We still have room for 3 on this ministry trip to Southern Sudan. Christians with gifts in teaching, preaching, evangelism and service are especially needed, as well as Christians with vocational medical skills. We'll also serve for three days in Uganda.
2. The fee is \$3,900. Please go to www.RMNI.org/1/sudan.html for complete information, and you may call 423-822-1091.



North India Ministry, September 2008

- 1. Our third India trip partners with a highly regarded ministry in Uttar Pradesh, NE India. Christians are 1.4% of the Uttar Pradesh population. Eighty percent of the populace is Hindu (World Christian Database). This too is an intensive ministry opportunity. Needed are Christians with teaching, preaching and service gifts, as well as those with medical competencies. Our Teams focus upon unity and intercultural friendship. Many take multiple trips with RMNI.
2. The trip fee is \$3500. See www.RMNI.org/1/india.html for more information.



Prayer and Praise



- Thank you for any prayers. Please pray that Monique and Kristie will join solid churches and have the strength to keep good resolves. We now have 1 regular urban ministry volunteer.
We are in need of only one more Board member!
Please pray for the best mission team members for both Sudan and India in 2008. We need 3 more for Sudan and at least 5 more for India, especially medical staff.
Please pray that I can complete editing questions of an African American
missions reader in a timely way.
Over the years we've seen many financial counselees. Currently three are facing serious challenges. Please pray that they will find financial freedom.
Our Board meets for a brain-storming meeting on March 15. Please pray for effective follow-up to this meeting.
The missions strategy seminar at Columbia, SC (Jan. 17-19) saw about 135 participants joining together to network and learn from one another. Plans are being made for
next year's conference. Pray for wisdom in preparations.
Please pray that several of us will this year be able to locate all current African American missionaries serving for at least 2 yrs.
That God will bless a Cedine Men's Retreat workshop on parenting in March.
Son Tim is taking a Professional Engineer exam in April.
To stay focused upon Jesus' priorities, for teaching opportunities and adequate prayer time.