

Detroit Church's conference on the restoration of the African-American Family

David Kasbow
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Under the leadership of Bishop Lewis Evens, American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) pastors gathered at Soul Harvest Ministries on November 10 in Highland Park for a conference on the restoration of the African-American Family. Highland Park is a small city within the borders of Detroit and is the historic site of the first assembly line, but is also one of the cities hardest hit with poverty and high crime within the Detroit Metro area. Pastor David Kasbow of the Detroit Family Church said, “We went there with the same spirit with which Father Moon went to Las Vegas: going to the lowest situation with the faith and vision that if that area could be restored, the whole community would rise as well.”

Unificationists along with ACLC clergy have held previous successful gatherings including one sponsored by a local Ambassador for Peace, Dr. Michael Ross, and one centering on the Muslim Community. This track record has helped them to make valuable connections in the community, including Mayor DeAndre Windom who attended the Highland Park event.

Rev. Cornelius Clark of Jacob House ministries in Chicago acted as emcee at the Highland Park conference. He introduced Mayor Windom who then warmly greeted the sixty participants, including an array of protestant pastors, Catholic priests, Muslim clerics, community activists, and civic and social leaders. The program was organized to first present the idea of the family as the original institution created by God. Rev. Willie Weston of Evangel Ministries of Chicago opened with a presentation on “the Three Blessings,” which lay out God’s plan for the family as the building block needed for a healthy and stable society. After a panel discussion by nine pastors on this topic, the participants discussed problems that the family faces today. Ms. Alice Thompson of Black Family Development, Inc. spoke about the state of the African American family, its history and current situation.

Over lunch, state representative Jim Runestad greeted the audience. Then Karalee Tabron, a representative of the automotive supplier Magna Seating Company, presented a check to Dr. Ross and Rev. Kasbow, Co-Chair of ACLC, to help sponsor the program.

The focus then turned to finding solutions. Rev. Kasbow presented a PowerPoint titled, "Childhood to Married Family Life: Youth Education for Marriage." He laid out helpful ideas that churches could use to promote a culture of marriage in the church and in the community.

Mrs. Myrtha Grice, a member of the Harriet Tubman Center and a wife of fifty-eight years, presented a feminine perspective on healthy marriage. She warmed everyone's heart with her testimony about the heart of serving she had her husband have toward each other. She said, "We may be old fashioned but the proof is in the pudding. We are still happily married while the young people are getting divorced."

After the presentations, the participants divided into three breakout sessions, which centered on men, women, and young people. These groups discussed how the information gained during the day could be used to help each group with their particular issues and needs regarding marriage and family.

The group reconvened to present their findings. Most of the groups saw the need for the congregations to focus on prayer and for pastors to guide their congregations by implementing ideas brought up at the seminar in a series of sermons on marriage. A yearly "marriage day" to honor couples was also suggested. The day was a success, and organizers hope to eventually establish a community marriage restoration association that would enable churches from across the community to come together in this important work.