

Detroit Clergy Rally to Turn Back Murder Wave in their City

Douglas Burton and David Kasbow
August 23, 2011

As reported by the Associated Press on Aug. 20, 2011, members of the Detroit-area American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLCL) held an anti-violence "prayer walk and declaration of peace" rally in a northwest Detroit neighborhood. The ACLCL convened a prayer breakfast and took a prayer walk from Leland Baptist Church in Brightmoor, one of Detroit's most hard-pressed and economically challenged areas.



Detroit pastors stand to receive "Family Flags" at prayer breakfast on Aug. 20, 2011 at Leland Baptist Church.

Both events drew participation of pastors, community leaders and residents. Rev. David Kasbo, leader of the Unification Church in Warren, Michigan, reported that the walk and rally were meant to encourage the city during tough times and develop plans for support.

Rev. Kasbow tells www.familyfed.org of the event that "Brightmoor is one of the most impoverished areas of the city." Rev. Kasbow further explains: "It just so happens that one of our ACLCL pastors, Fr. Lawrence Ventline, had served as pastor of the Catholic church right next door to Leland Baptist Church in the early and mid-1980s. When Fr. Ventline heard we would have the prayer breakfast in his old neighborhood, he suggested that we hold a prayer walk there. Also stimulating our desire to hold it was the fact that there were over 17 murders in the city of Detroit the week before.

"We chose the theme, 'Standing in the Gap,' for the prayer breakfast and prayer walk based on Ezekiel 22: 30 wherein God lamented that He had looked for a man to 'stand in the gap' on behalf of the nation but found none," Rev. Kasbow writes.

At the prayer breakfast the ministers made a joint declaration read aloud by Archbishop George Augustus Stallings, a co-chairman of the ACLCL and founder of the Imani Temple in Washington, D.C. Archbishop Stallings declared that "there is a gap in families, in churches, and in our culture. We pledged to be the people who would 'stand in the gaps' of our world to reconcile and heal them."



Rev. Dr. Cecil A. Poe, third from left, addresses ministers at the rally on Fenkell Avenue in Detroit, held under the banner of "Standing in the Gap."

More than 50 clergy, congregation members, and neighbors gathered for the prayer breakfast and prayer walk at Leland M. B. Church, hosted by Rev. Dr. Cecil A. Poe. After prayers, a good breakfast, and the music of the International Choir, Archbishop George A. Stallings Jr. gave the message and exhorted the gathering to be those who God is looking for and who can “stand in the gap” of the world’s ills, to be agents of healing and reconciliation.

Elijah Generation Partnership

Following the message, a call was given for all to join in partnership with the ACLC by signing the “Elijah Generation Partnership” form. Those who signed were presented with a framed, “Family Flag” to hang in their church. The clergy prayed that the flag would draw an anointing on their churches to protect their families from divorce and conflict.

The ministers then headed out onto Fenkell Ave in front of the Leland Baptist church. The group walked to the corner, crossed the street, and gathered opposite the church, holding one banner. Half the group then crossed back around in front of the church and faced the other group with another banner. The street between them was a symbol of the gap.

“We bridged the gap through prayer, song and a declaration read by Archbishop Stallings,” Rev. Kasbow writes. Archbishop Stallings told the assembly, “We are shocked and dismayed at the rash of murders in Detroit in recent weeks... We come here today beyond denomination and race to be an example that the gaps can be bridged.” We pledged to continue to work in this effort.”

Contributed by Douglas Burton in New York and David Kasbow in Detroit