



## CULTURAL RESOURCES

**Sunday, April 21, 2013**

**Jacqueline Blue, Guest Cultural Resource Commentator**

PhD Candidate, Practical Theology, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA

### **I. History**

“I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding”<sup>1</sup> is a common verse of Scripture that is read on pastor anniversaries. It serves as an acknowledgment of God’s perpetual care for God’s Church. Moreover, the verse is a reminder to the pastor that while their work takes place on a human level, their service is ultimately to God. Its practice dates back to the infant church and continues in both large and small churches due to its significance. The Pastor’s anniversary is a time set aside for the members to give expressions to the pastor for his or her work and faithfulness on their behalf. Traditionally each auxiliary makes a statement of thanksgiving for the long hours, care and support, sermons, prayers, counseling, and more that a pastor has given. It is a moment of great celebration, to “pay tribute to whom tribute is due.”<sup>2</sup>

There are all-too-rare pastors who take on the work of justice. The work of justice understands the mission and message of Jesus to include intentionally standing against oppressive structures. These pastors are found engaged in a variety of social issues in an effort to bring about equality. The issues they address are far-reaching and their negative impact upon the black community is particularly damaging because of the domino effect. For example, incarceration effects education, lack of education effects access to employment, lack of employment effects financial well-being, lack of financial well-being effects the ability to care for one’s self and family.

### **II. Biographical Sketches of Pastors Doing the Work of Justice**

The work of justice is an ongoing task for the Church. From its earliest days, the Black Church stood at the forefront of social issues concerning wellness and equality for African Americans. In the face of a church culture distracted by large buildings, titles, and questions regarding

strategies on increasing members, the prophetic call for justice continues. The call continues because all is not well in the land as the systemic issues of oppression continue to hold sway.

Pastors like the four featured below are continually answering the call by standing against the prevailing winds of injustice by doing the work of justice. Through their diligent efforts, they continue to answer the question posed in the book of Micah: “What does the Lord require of you?”<sup>3</sup>

**Bishop Evette Flunder** began the City of Refuge United Church of Christ in 1991 in order to unite a gospel ministry with a social ministry. City of Refuge is a thriving inner-city



congregation that celebrates the radically inclusive love of Jesus Christ. A native San Franciscan, Bishop Flunder is a third-generation preacher with roots in the Church of God in Christ. She was licensed in the COGIC and later ordained by the Bishop Walter Hawkins of Love Center Ministries, where she once served as associate pastor and administrator for the Oakland-based Love Center Church.

Reverend Flunder is also an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ and a graduate of the Ministry Studies and Master of Arts programs at the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California. She received a Doctor of Ministry degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, California.

Responding to the needs created by the AIDS epidemic, Bishop Flunder and her staff opened Hazard-Ashley House and Walker House in Oakland and Restoration House in San Francisco through the Ark of Refuge, Inc. The Ark of Refuge, Inc. is a nonprofit agency which provides housing, direct services, education, and training for persons affected by HIV/AIDS in the Bay Area, throughout the USA, and in three countries in Africa. Restoration House is a dual-diagnosis residential facility for African American women and the first of its kind in San Francisco. Walker House serves persons in recovery and those living with HIV in Oakland, CA. The Ark provides HIV/AIDS education and prevention services targeting the African American and African faith community. The Ark opened in collaboration with the AIDS Healthcare Foundation and the Magic Johnson Clinic to provide primary medical care services. The Ark has also provided substance abuse intervention programs, transitional housing for homeless youth, mentorship programs, and a computer lab and audio/video training for community youth.

Bishop Flunder is a Trustee and adjunct professor at Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California. She is a board member of the National Sexuality Resource Center, an active voice for the Religion Council of the Human Rights Campaign, and co-chair of the Religious Advisory Committee of the National Black Justice Coalition. She also serves on the United Church of Christ Unified Governance Working Group as a representative of the United Church of Christ Seminaries.<sup>4</sup>



**Pastor Charles B. Jackson, Sr.** is a native of West Columbia, South Carolina. Dr. Jackson's education includes a BS in Mathematics, Benedict College (Magna Cum Laude), Columbia, South Carolina, MDIV, Morehouse School of Religion of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia, and one year of certification of residency in Clinical Pastoral Education at the South Carolina Academy for Pastoral Education. He received an Honorary Doctor of Divinity from Benedict College.

At the age of 18, Reverend Jackson was installed as pastor of his home church, the Brookland Baptist Church in West Columbia, South Carolina, where he has served for 41 years. The church has 65 ministries, a full-service Federal Credit Union, the Brookland Foundation, a charitable (501)(c)(3), the Brookland Center for Community and Economic Change, the Brookland-West Columbia Community and Housing Development Corporation, and the Brookland Community Pediatric Center, which is a collaborative effort with the Eau Claire Cooperative.

Pastor Jackson furthered his vision of economic empowerment by leading the completion of a 68,000-square-foot Community Resource Center in September 2005. The center consists of an Academy Child Development Center, a Health and Wellness Center, and a Banquet and Conference Center. On March 28, 2008, the Lexington District II School Board awarded Brookland the former Lakeview/Northside School, a 94,000-square-foot educational facility on 11 acres of land, to be converted into the Brookland-Lakeview Empowerment Center. As a result of the Church's Economic Empowerment Initiative, over 160 persons are employed in Brookland's ministry.

A former president of the South Carolina Baptist Congress of Christian Education and the Gethsemane Baptist Congress of Christian Education, Pastor Jackson has held and still holds membership in a number of denominational, civic, and community organizations.<sup>5</sup>

**Reverend Stacey Latimer** is the Founder/CEO of Love Alive International Inc., a faith-based nonprofit organization committed to empowering those oppressed by structures, systems,



cultures, and traditions that impede their physical and mental progress as it pertains to HIV and AIDS and other health issues that disproportionately plague the black community. He is a member of the Executive Leadership Council of Unity Fellowship of Christ Church Movement of NYC. He has worked on HIV/AIDS issues in varying capacities for 15 years.

His tenure encompasses national capacity building work with the African American Capacity Building Initiative, a program of the Harm Reduction Coalition of NYC; National Diffusion of Effective Behavioral Intervention Trainer for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of Atlanta, GA; National Trainer for *Affirming A Future of Hope*, a program of the Interdenominational Theological Center of Atlanta, GA; Director of the Balm In Gilead's Resource Center and Coordinator of its Black Church HIV/AIDS Network; Director of Outreach for Project Care in Greenville, SC; and he is a 20-year participant with the Jackson Foundation, HIV/AIDS research through military medicine.

Reverend Latimer has been instrumental in the national mobilization of the Black Church around issues of HIV and AIDS and sexuality. Nationally he collaborated and partnered with churches, health departments, and civic and community organizations to mobilize, educate, and encourage and provide HIV testing. As a fearless and tireless advocate for people living with HIV and AIDS, his work has profound influence on individuals and public policy in the United States. He is the 2008 recipient of the Stewart Kessler Community Service Award.

Reverend Stacey Latimer's roots of service in faith began in South Carolina in a Baptist Church at the age of eight. His ministry and work in HIV and AIDS has crossed many denominational lines. As a minister of the gospel, a black gay man, and a 22-plus year survivor of an HIV diagnosis, Reverend Latimer continues to be an international voice heralding a word of hope as he pursues justice and equality for the oppressed and disenfranchised.<sup>6</sup>

**Reverend J. Michael Little** is a native of Detroit, Michigan. Reverend Little believes that preaching is the primary task of the Church, that everything else is secondary to this, and can be



represented as the outworking of the preached Word in daily practice. Reverend Little's education includes a BA from Morehouse College (with honors) and a MDIV from Virginia Union University. After much prayer, Reverend Little felt a "second" prophetic call to seek justice and liberty for the poor and oppressed of our society. By God's grace, he enrolled in and earned a Jurist Doctor degree from Georgetown University Law Center, where his focus was Constitutional and Human Rights law. Pastor Little also

studied theology at the University of Kent at Canterbury, England, and Boston University School of Theology, where he is enrolled in the Pastor-Scholar program.

Upon graduation from Georgetown, Reverend Little founded Jeremiah's Circle of Friends, Inc. (JCF). Jeremiah's Circle of Friends, Inc. is a collaborative community-based nonprofit organization that seeks to assist vulnerable residents of the Washington, DC area by providing essential services, including food, clothing, and access to affordable housing, legal aid, mediation services, life skills training, and a youth development program. JCF enlists compassionate professionals and organizations to donate their time and talents to achieve the aims of the organization. "We are guided at all times by our commitment to a just society, and by our desire to empower the people and families we serve," says Little. The JCF Law Clinic strives to provide quality legal and mediation services based on respect and empowerment that everyone deserves. Their pro bono model builds bridges and provides an enriching professional experience for their volunteers.<sup>7</sup>

### **III. Poetry**

#### **Solid Ground**

by Jerry Hoffman

Driven hard before the wind,  
The sea waves crash around.

The unrelenting storms assail;  
I rest on solid ground.  
The lightning fills the sky above;  
The thunder's ominous sound;  
The rain and hail devouring;  
I rest on solid ground.  
The tremors of the earth beneath,  
May make my path unsound.  
But I am safe, unshaken,  
I rest on solid ground.  
I rest upon the promise,  
Of Christ my living King;  
That He will be there with me,  
Whatever life's storms bring.  
I rest in full assurance  
That God is in control.  
My bark is often battered,  
But God protects the soul.  
So though the raging storms assail,  
Wherever they are found.  
I need not fear the outcome,  
For I rest on solid ground.<sup>8</sup>

### **In His Hands**

by Lou Marin

Like a potter working a bit of clay,  
He molds me more each and every day.  
I am thankful The Lord has never  
cast this unfinished lump away.  
A soft touch, sublime and so clever,  
molds my spirit and soul more than ever  
did society's tough desires and demands.  
I hope to never break The Potter's tether.  
I am slowly smoothed by my Master's hands.  
My frailty and mistakes He understands.  
Like a thrown pot or vase created  
I take the shape The Creator commands.  
The Potter fixed what life desecrated  
now I am His creation as I have related.  
I am no longer a vessel, soul vacated.  
I hope when He looks at me He is elated.<sup>9</sup>

### **God's Instrument**

by Judy Crowe

I see the hands that hold God's word  
And fold in prayer to seek His will.  
I see the feet that walk the path  
And offers of praise as from lofty hill.  
I see the hands that serve Him well,  
The ears that seek to hear His call,  
The mouth that speaks truth and wisdom,  
The busy feet that carry the message to all.  
I see the heart that was pricked and entered  
When God's man answered the gospel call  
And yielded His life as a humble servant,  
A man who is willing, as was Apostle Paul.  
I see all of this as he stands in the pulpit,  
An instrument through which God speaks  
The words of wisdom, of love and peace,  
To lead and guide all those whom God seeks.<sup>10</sup>

### **A Pastor's Heart**

by Deanna Malawy

A pastor's heart is Protective  
and guards his [her] flock from Satan's snares.  
A pastor's heart is Attentive  
and seeks to know his [her] people's cares.  
A pastor's heart is Sacrificial  
and for his [her] sheep will give its all.  
A pastor's heart is Tender  
and listens to the Spirit's call.  
A pastor's heart is Obedient  
and heeds the Master's commands.  
A pastor's heart is Reflective  
and considers he [she] is but a man [or woman].<sup>11</sup>

### **IV. Songs That Speak to the Moment**

The songs selected for this Sunday carry a three-fold meaning. First, they concern *confession*. The words of "In Your Will" by Men of Standard are those that speak to the pastors' declaration of what he or she will do. It is a song of *reflection*, which provides the pastor a moment to remember the joys and pain of the past year, but more importantly the pastoral promise made at the time of installation: to preach, pray, study and do God's will.<sup>12</sup> Second, they concern *dedication*. "I Then Shall Live" by Gloria Gaither addresses how the pastor lives out his or her confession. It speaks to not only the attributes of the pastor as a person, but also how those qualities should be enacted in the lives of others. Lastly, "Total Praise" by Richard Smallwood is the natural outgrowth of a life *dedicated* to God for the service of humankind.

## **In Your Will**

by Men of Standard

(Verse)

I won't give up or give in  
I'm holding on till the end  
I will be steadfast unmovable  
Always abounding in You  
Lord, I'm staying in Your will

I won't give up or give in  
I'm holding on till the end  
I will be steadfast unmovable  
Always abounding in You  
Lord, I'm staying in Your will

(Chorus)

I'm staying in Your will  
I'm staying, Lord  
I'm staying in Your will, I'm staying  
I'm staying in Your will  
I'm staying, Lord  
Said I'm staying in Your will

I'm staying in Your will  
I'm staying, Lord  
I'm staying in Your will, I'm staying  
I'm staying in Your will  
I'm staying, Lord  
Said I'm staying in Your will

Promise You, Lord  
I am staying in Your will, Your will  
Promise You, Lord  
I am staying in Your will, Your will<sup>13</sup>

## **I Then Shall Live**

by Gloria Gaither

(Verse)

I then shall live as one who's been forgiven;  
I'll walk with joy to know my debts are paid.  
I know my name is clear before my Father;  
I am His child, and I am not afraid.  
So greatly pardoned, I'll forgive my brother,

The law of love I gladly will obey.

I then shall live as one who's learned compassion;  
I've been so loved that I'll risk loving too.  
I know how fear builds walls instead of bridges;  
I'll dare to see another's point of view.  
And when relationship demands commitment,  
Then I'll be there to care and follow through.

(Chorus)

Your kingdom come around and through and in me;  
Your power and glory, let them shine through me;  
Your Hallowed name, O may I bear with honor,  
And may You living Kingdom come in me.  
The Bread of Life, O may I share with honor,  
And may You feed a hungry world through me.

Amen. Amen. Amen.<sup>14</sup>

### **Total Praise**

by Richard Smallwood

Lord, I will lift my eyes to the hills  
Knowing my help is coming from You  
Your peace You give me in time of the storm

You are the source of my strength  
You are the strength of my life  
I lift my hands in total praise to You

You are the source of my strength  
You are the strength of my life  
I lift my hands in total praise to You

Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen  
Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen

You are the source of my strength  
You are the strength of my life  
I lift my hands in total praise to You

Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen  
Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen<sup>15</sup>

### **V. Make This a Memorable Learning Moment**

## Hold a Youth/Young Adult Justice Forum

### Instructions

Develop a list of justice issues that are of concern to the youth and young adults of your church. From the list, begin to develop questions surrounding the issues. Sub-divide the group into two sections, having one address the issue from a position of power and the other from a powerless position. You may want to have two groups of teens and two groups of young adults. Each group is given the same set of questions previously developed to investigate. To facilitate learning, coordinate visits with outside agencies for the youth and young adults to obtain more information and obtain an increased understanding of the issues.

For example, if one of the concerns is incarceration, contact the local detention center or the local courthouse to sit in on hearings, or speak to the local police, etc. If possible, each sub-group should attempt to obtain data. For instance, ask the number of 15–20-year-olds arrested in the last 30 days (and why) or how many have appeared in court (and the types of offenses). Next, each group should interview the pastor to get a sense of his or her views on the issue as well as examine the church's activities (or lack thereof) addressing the issue.

Additionally, each sub-group should set aside time for group discussion. Finally, at an established date and time, hold a *Justice Forum* where each side will debate the issue, with the pastor (or a designee) as the facilitator. Towards the end of the forum, set aside time for the youth/young adults to state what they learned and propose ways in which the church should engage the issue. This is a great Pastor's Anniversary activity. Use the following websites; they will provide information that will be useful regardless of the issue that your youth and young adults choose to discuss.

- NAACP Issues HIV-AIDS Manual for Black Churches. Online location: <http://www.npr.org/2012/07/10/156533609/naacp-issues-hiv-aids-manual-for-black-churches>
- Social Consciousness in the Black Church. Online location: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12007604>
- National Urban League—State of Black America Report. Online location: <http://www.iamempowered.com/node/23900>
- Bryan Stevenson and Michelle Alexander on Injustice. Online location: <http://billmoyers.com/content/bryan-stevenson-and-michelle-alexander/>
- Faith and Family: African-American Families. Online location: <http://video.pbs.org/video/2250819085>

### Notes

1. Meeks, Wayne A., ed. The Harper Collins Study Bible (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1989), 1119.
2. Jackson, Charles B. "Our Pastor." Brookland Baptist Church. Online location: [http://www.brooklandbaptist.org/pages/page.asp?page\\_id=156735](http://www.brooklandbaptist.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=156735) (accessed 12 November 2012).
3. The Harper Collins Study Bible, 1388.
4. Flunder, Yvette. "Bishop Flunder." City of Refuge UCC. Online location: <http://www.sfrefuge.org/content.cfm?id=2008> (accessed 12 November 2012).
5. Jackson, Charles B. "Our Pastor." Brookland Baptist Church. Online location: [http://www.brooklandbaptist.org/pages/page.asp?page\\_id=156735](http://www.brooklandbaptist.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=156735) (accessed 12 November 2012).
6. Latimer, Stacey. "Rev. Stacey Latimer." Love Alive International, Inc. Online location: <http://www.ethanslin.com/portfolioWorks/webDevelopment/LoveAlive/revstacey.html> (accessed 12 November 2012).
7. Little, Michael. "Our Pastor." Friendship Baptist Church. Online location: <http://www.friendshipbaptistdc.org.php5-20.dfw1-1.websitetestlink.com/ourpastor/jcf-legal-clinic/> (accessed 12 November 2012).
8. Hoffman, Jerry. "Solid Ground." Ujamaa Christian Poetry. Online location: <http://www.myujamaa.org/jerry4.html> (accessed 1 December 2012).
9. Marin, Lou. "In His Hands." Ujamaa Christian Poetry. Online location: <http://www.myujamaa.org/marin13.html> (accessed 1 December 2012).
10. Crowe, Judy. "God's Instrument." My-Pastor.Com. Online location: <http://www.my-pastor.com/pastor-appreciation-poems.html> (accessed 21 October 2012).
11. Malawy, Deanna. "A Pastor's Heart." My-Pastor.Com. Online location: <http://www.my-pastor.com/pastor-appreciation-poems.html>, (accessed 21 October 2012).
12. Baker, Benjamin S. Special Occasions in the Black Church (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1989), 29.
13. Men of Standard. "In Your Will." Online location: <http://www.songlyrics.com/men-of-standard/in-your-will-lyrics/#1E2LbY6AklQFeyxg.99> (accessed 1 December 2012).
14. Gaither, Gloria. "Then I Shall Live." Online location: [http://www.praisegathering.com/media-files/pdf/gg1780j\\_lyrics.pdf/;](http://www.praisegathering.com/media-files/pdf/gg1780j_lyrics.pdf/)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsq3aDNhZIQ> (accessed 12 November 2012).

15. Smallwood, Richard Smallwood. "Total Praise." Online location: <http://www.metrolyrics.com/total-praise-lyrics-richard-smallwood.html> (accessed 1 December 2012).