

# Newsletter |

SPRING  
2022



# Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.

## 2022 Clergy and Lay Leadership

Our theme, "Envisioning Something New: Can You See It?", affirms God's recreative power awaiting our proclamation and participation. We know something new is on the horizon and we are challenged to envision and reimagine a new future, ever mindful of God Emmanuel and Gye Nyame!

With our theme in mind, we bring...

### Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference 2022: Young Adult Reflections

In February 2022, seven young adult members of Global Ministries attended this year's Proctor Conference. GM sponsored two young ministry members from South Africa (W.W. Brown), one member from Los Angeles, and four members from the Bay Area (Allen Temple). They submitted the following reflections giving a glimpse of their experiences.

**Prompted to Push Harder and Tread Wider in the Fight for Justice and Equity for All of God's People.** – *Daniel Mastin*

It is always an exciting time when February comes. Not solely because of Black History Month but because every year we know we're getting closer and closer to Proctor Season. A time to relax and breathe in amongst peers and contemporaries yes, but moreover, a time and place to be challenged and reinvigorated, prompted to push harder and tread wider in the fight for justice and equity for all of God's people.

This year was in a new format, as due to this pandemic all of our lives and means of interaction have changed drastically, yet the community remained strong and the zeal for justice even more fervent. We saw bold and unapologetic classes as always and powerful presenters and presentations. Though we were not in person, in the flesh this year, the conference still packed its usual theological punch.

I attended all the sessions that I could, in 2022 fashion, via iPhone and iPad at home, at work and in the closest Peet's Coffee I could find in transit, though I direly long to get back to convening the conference in action in the future it was nice to be able to attend around my own daily life and still feel connected.

As for how we were fed this year...

We had our concepts of acceptance pushed. Who is a child of God? Why? To what extent? How do we become a more inclusive and



supportive body? Why should we deny and or push out our family simply for how they may identify or who they may love? We were brought to recognize the lasting scars and realize the damage and the internally oppressive and repressive powers sometimes wielded by the oppressed and repressed.

We had our understandings of violence in our communities examined and broadened. Opening up a conversation rarely had to the depths and the intersections that was had at proctor. We heard from many who came from many cities with many different laws, dynamics, setups, makeups, and statuses. Yet all carry a similar weight of enduring increased hostility within and between black people in our communities. We evaluated the numbers, went past the buzz-words and the talking points so often weaponized and politicized, to find a true core. We heard stances of pacifists, escapists, activists to Gun owners, gun advocates, to those straddling the fence. All different, but all wanting to end chronic violence in the end... but in the interim, finding need to shield those who don't wish to be involved in violent situations from involuntary involvement in such, protect ourselves from being victims to violence, and figuring out how to create and embed code of conduct and safeguards within our communities to protect those who can't protect themselves.

We had our relationships to the environment explored. We were urged to create a greener, more energy efficient and self-sustainable body of Christ. Environmental concerns were brought to our attention both in means of cultural efficacy and importance but moreover for the survival of the whole planet. Our inner Environmental Activists were called to action and our epigenetic connections to the earth were coaxed as just as we are called to aid and serve humanity so are we to be good stewards

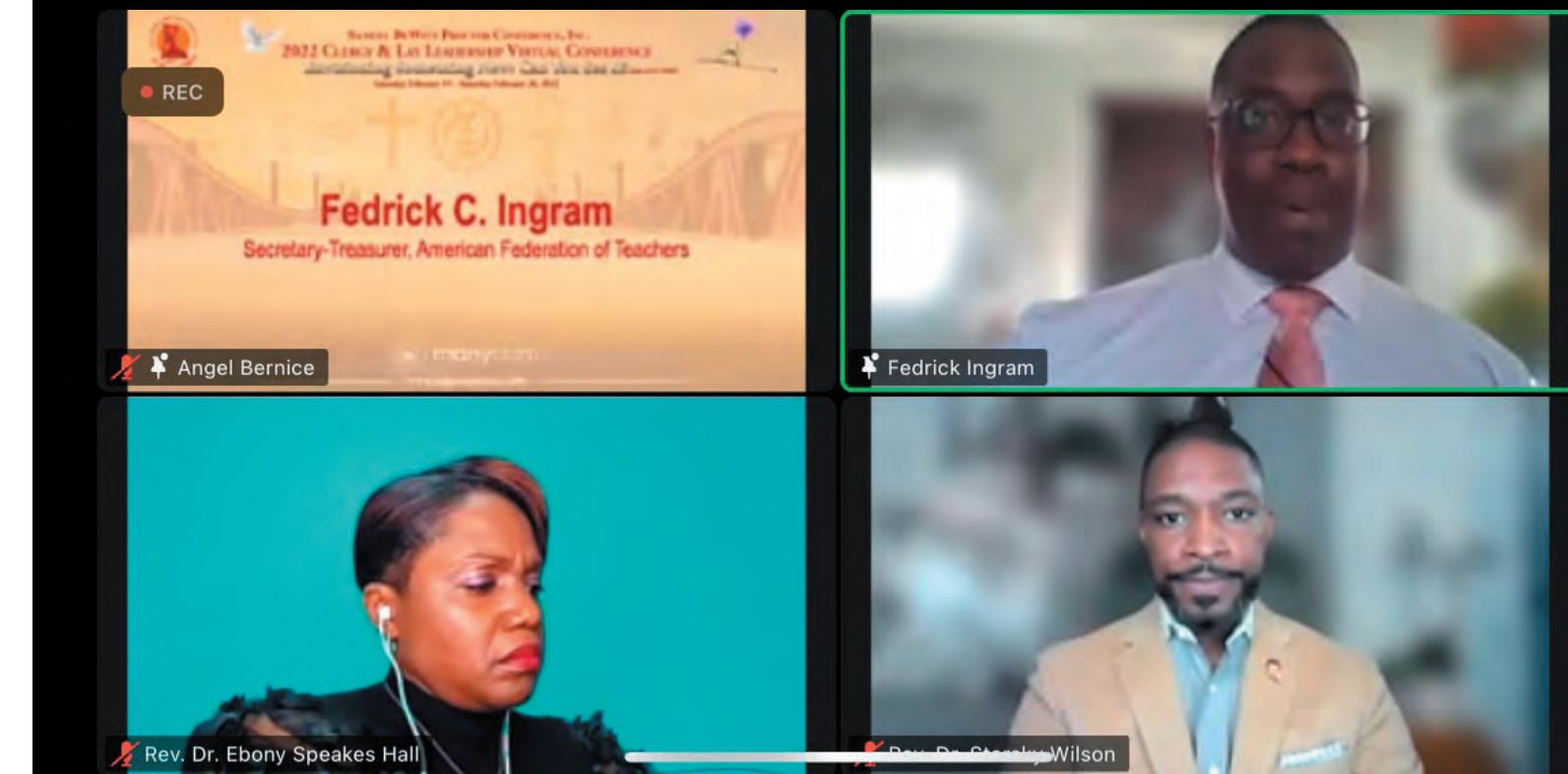
of this earth and all within it, not as masters or controllers, but moderating our behaviors and aiding in what ways we can to limit damage, foster regeneration and sustain balance and remain in such not only for ourselves but for everything around us, living and inert.

Our concepts of space were challenged. Do we truly need walls to be a church ? Did Jesus? We explored the evolving needs of the communities we live in and those we are being pushed from and how churches and church leadership can meet the need. Even if it means reinventing our role and changing how we utilize our spaces, big or small. We see a housing crisis, insane inflation, wealth/economic disparity, healthcare disparity, food deserts, nutrition inequality, water and air pollution, energy overhaul, transportation issues, legal inefficiency /inaccessibility, cultural erasure etc... the list goes on. But churches have to be willing to step in the gaps where they are needed. What good is it to have 1000 churches on 100 corners and own not one of the blocks they're built upon. Do we always need to have a large physical church building, when folks need housing, a bank/credit union , or a grocery store/co-op, or a farm, or a clinic/ hospital, a pharmacy or all of the above?

We have to shift our understandings of what the body of Christ is and the purpose it serves and how in particular the black church doesn't lose itself in itself for inability to pivot and respond to the real needs of the climate and people around us, those who support us and those whom we are made up of.

#### **“How Are The Children?,” and “Under the Baobab Tree.” – Rev. Alexandria Spearman**

What a mighty time in the Lord I experienced as I tuned in virtually for the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference Inc. 2022 Clergy and Lay Leadership Virtual Conference where the theme “Envisioning Something New: Can You See It?”,



affirms God's recreative power awaiting our proclamation and participation. Upon receiving a scholarship from the Global Missions Ministry at Allen Temple BC I was able to attend, learn and be nourished by the spirit of God.

Among the workshop offerings, I found the following two to be most insightful and relevant to my specific ministry: "How Are The Children?," and "Under the Baobab Tree."

Upon hearing the Massai greeting, "And how are the children?," we are moved to analyze the implications of such a deep and profound question. Out of the conversation came questions and dialogical conversations such as these: How are the Black girls? When we seek to center black girls in policy and institution, why does the conversation return to black boys and how do we redirect with equity? Why don't we understand yet that when black girls flourish, everyone flourishes? How is your church acknowledging the need for children's mental health practitioners? What can we implement in our Christian education to help children resist sexual offenses? Where are the missing children? What can congregations do to help children connect to Wi-Fi and log in to virtual schooling if this is their only option and the internet is not accessible to them? In response to these questions, myself and the impassioned group offered feedback such as: adopting a classroom, partnering with parents to attend PTA meetings as mediators, centering the voice of children, uplifting their agency by asking what they want, talk with them directly, and develop the church to be an ecosystem that creates the best life chance possible. This course guides my call to children and youth ministry by reminding me that I am not alone in the work, and that there is more to be done and can be done in direct and simple action.

"Under The Baobab Tree" framed the issues of environmental racism and injustice, identifying the consequences it is having on our world and our communities and quality of life. This course aligned us to the fact that environmental justice is both racial and social justice. When one learns the history of environmental ideologies and policies, we begin to see clearly the path that racism leads. So what does that mean for the church? Everything. Churches and communities at-large have the opportunity to participate in decisions that can affect their health or environment and say no to unwanted destructive industry. No segment of the population should face a disproportionate burden from the environmental consequences of industry, business or government policies. This course shed light on current issues including climate change, Urban Heat Islands in Virginia, clean water crises, forced migration, food instability and more. Over all, it was made clear that these issues are moral challenges. We have a moral obligation not to harm others, to be fair, to care for the poor and vulnerable. Creation and the natural world are gifts of which we have the responsibility for being good stewards as caring for the natural world is an act of worship. Ultimately, we live our faith out loud through the actions and personal commitments we take.

#### **Bishop Leah Daugherty – "Hone Your Faith So It Can Be Deep and Broad."**

– Rev. Armae Johnson

I grew up in a faith tradition that didn't question God. If you did, you were considered weird or a heretic. We believed because we were afraid not to believe. This left many of us with unanswered questions. Questions that we carried into adulthood. I entered Seminary at the bright age of 22. I had just graduated from college and was serving in my father's church. It was in seminary that I begin to ask myself some of those hard

questions that I still wrestle with today. Why do bad things happen to good people? Why would God allow a little child to suffer? Bishop Leah's advice to Seminary students resonated with me and challenged me to embrace the hard questions that come about during my faith walk. It is through that embrace that my faith is honed. I was deeply encouraged by her statement.

#### **Creating Safe Spaces for Children**

Another theme that was discussed during Proctor was creating safe spaces for children. As a mother, I realize the importance of creating an atmosphere where even at the toddler stage, my child can come to me freely without fear and express how she may feel. As she gets older, my goal will be to continue to provide a safe space for her to share her life, challenges, goals etc. with me. Her voice is important. So even when she becomes a teenager and thinks I'm oh so weird, I hope she knows that she can still come to me about anything. Overall, I enjoyed this session and was challenged to be the best mother I can be to my child.

#### **Proctor Conference 2022—Virtual Concert for The Young, Gifted & Black – Dan Reagans**

With Covid-19 affecting every part of the world since late 2019 life as we know it has been an adjustment to say the least for many. The Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference Inc. 2022 has not been the exception, but on the contrary it has become the most adjusted/improved. If the phrase "rolling with the punches" was a person, this year's 2022 Proctor virtual conference would be it (him/her). The zeal and luster that comes with in-person fellowship/attendance has eluded countless gatherings during this pandemic but with the help of modern technology - namely the [Whova app](#) (a smart-device-friendly app that allows users to gain insight and access to other professionals attending specific workshops virtually, while on the go) this has not been the case here.

Being able to interact with like-minded young black professionals nationwide from one's individual comfort zone has organically removed the pressure of physical presentation and diverted that excess energy into a great force of progressiveness. Focusing in on many of the issues and dilemmas that plague our community and remain hot topics on social media, but sometimes deemed too controversial or inappropriate for church settings (i.e. LGBTQ inclusion, and the PTSD behind gun violence, CRT and school curriculum, African American mental health), this virtual experience was able to flourish with rich ideas/conversation and passion unrestrained - void of judgment, and most importantly with the Holy spirit and love of Christ omnipresent. Rarely have I experienced these elements or made solid connections without a physical presence being required. Nor have I been left longing for greater discussion or been more inspired to build, conquer and achieve. Two things are for certain, I have the power to do anything through Christ Jesus who strengthens me and I will be in attendance every year here after - in Jesus' name.



## Allen Temple Baptist Church WMS and GM Support for Haiti

– Rev. Theophous H. Reagans, Esq.

In 2021, after the devastating earthquake in Haiti, GM sent twenty-four boxes of new clothing to Haiti for children who had lost everything. That clothing was distributed to families most in need. In partnership with Mission of Grace, GM also donated funds and purchased and donated 100 tarps to provide temporary shelter from the rain for those whose homes were damaged or destroyed. This year, joined by ATBC Women's Mission, GM is partnering with Mission of Grace to provide more permanent shelter. More than 7,000 families need permanent walls and floors because of the damage done by the earthquake

to their homes. The families being helped are very poor and have at least four children. Our partner, Mission of Grace, is choosing families with the greatest need. Our goal is to provide homes that protect against the elements and that will be safe if another earthquake hits the area. The new walls and floors will be constructed with stronger cement. We have already donated funding to restore two homes and plan to donate more. The cost to restore each home is \$2,000. Anyone wishing to support this effort should contact Rev. Theophous Reagans at [Theophous@gmail.com](mailto:Theophous@gmail.com).



May we share, from our struggles and triumphs, the possibilities that we have experienced and envisioned in Christ Jesus. Make us friends to all the world; a world which you loved so dearly that you gave your Son for its salvation. We thank you for the privileges and comforts which we enjoy in our land. We pray for security and justice in all lands.

# Liberation Theologies: Contextual Application

## Allen Temple Baptist Church Global Ministries

— Rev. Theophous H. Reagans, Esq.



This year, the Louisville Institute provided a Pastoral Study grant to investigate the application of liberation theologies to the current iteration of the Civil Rights Movement (Black Lives Matter Movement).

*Question from young adult:* “How do we young adults participate in the struggle for social justice and yet remain Christian?”

Dr. Boesak responded: “We would all do well to remember that the world belongs to God. Our calling as Christians is to dare to name and confess God from within our politics, from the heart of our commitment to justice. Naming God means to stake our lives for and with those who are considered of low in status by the rich and powerful. Naming God in our lives and in our politics is naming the hope that never dies, the future that still exists, that is waiting to be claimed by all of us on behalf of all of us, the love that will not let us go. Naming God means standing where God stands, fighting for whom God fights—the children, the women, and the undefended.”

This question and others raised during a Zoom meeting with Dr. Allan Boesak and Servant

Brian Woodson reveal that our young people are trying to connect their concerns and their work in the community with the work of the Lord through the church. We thought this topic deserved further discussion. So, I designed a series of workshops to provide opportunities for some of our young adults to go deeper—to learn more about the tradition of liberation theologies and to see how those theologies might be important to their fight for justice.

### Core Question

Can liberating theologies equip and encourage young adults, who have embraced public activism and the Black Lives Matter Movement, integrate their faith into their work of standing in solidarity with the marginalized in our society and of effecting social justice change. And, does integrating their faith into their activism strengthen them and help them to succeed? This is important to our young people of course, because we want them to succeed in their efforts to create a more just society. It is important to the church as well because so much of our social progress in the past has been built on evolving theological understanding, and 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.

We have discovered that some of our young GM participants are working as social activists, trying to respond to social issues like racism and sexism, but they do not see this work as remotely connected to a larger history of Christian public witness or to any Christian community. There appears to be a disconnect between these arenas for them, such that neither informs the other and their spiritual lives are fragmented or compartmentalized. We hope that introduction to, and theological reflection on liberating theologies will help them to see more clearly how their faith intersects with their personal passion for social change. Oppression around the globe results in increasing social injustice. This is often supported by bad theology and we want to change that by lifting up liberating theologies (black, womanist, and queer) in order to transform and empower Christians, especially our young Christians, to combat these systems of oppression. Our topics will include but will not be limited to:

1. systemic racism
2. loss of young lives at the hands of police
3. gang violence
4. imprisonment
5. the reluctance of the church to decry injustice or demand reforms in the public square
6. domestic violence
7. sexual abuse
8. heterosexism
9. patriarchal dominance in churches and society.

*The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; God has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,*

*To bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners,*

*To provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of Gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. Isaiah 61:1-3*



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