

Page Number: Page 1 of 3

Agency: GCOM

Title: Report on Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century

Financial Implications: None

Report No. 11

Petition Number:

REPORT ON STRENGTHENING THE BLACK CHURCH FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Background and Mandate

The initiative, Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century (SBC-21), was established by actions of the 1996 General Conference. The 2000 General Conference approved continuance of SBC-21 as a major program initiative. The initiative called for the establishment of a 23-member Coordinating Committee to oversee the implementation of the Plan of Action for the initiative. The Coordinating Committee would continue to be accountable to the General Council on Ministries (GCOM) for administration; accounting and fund allocation in response to the budgetary decisions made by the Coordinating Committee; annual progress reports; and a plan of evaluation. The Coordinator would continue to be an employee of GCOM and covered by all GCOM personnel policies and practices.

Process and Implementation

The first quadrennial meeting of the Coordinating Committee, which included general agency resource persons, was held in Jacksonville, Florida, February 23-25, 2001. Bishop Jonathan D. Keaton is the chairperson for this initiative.

Progress reports have been shared with GCOM to keep them abreast of the work of the Coordinating Committee and to explore ways to provide ongoing support and assistance. GCOM has been an advocate and supportive partner for the initiative.

The goal of SBC-21 is to offer The United Methodist Church the gift of a transformational learning model that enables one congregation to share its gift of vitality with other churches wanting to expand their gifts in mission and ministry; and in the process, to revitalize Black congregations and The United Methodist Church.

The fulfillment of this goal included the following:

◆ The Congregation Resource Centers

Maintained a level of twenty-two (22) Congregation Resource Centers (CRC) housed in vital Black churches located across the five jurisdictions. CRCs fulfilled their role as the primary place for training lay and clergy teams, and establishing a covenant relationship with partner churches for congregational revitalization.

◆ Developed Clergy & Lay Resource Leadership Teams

Congregation Resource Center Training Summit developed for lay and clergy teams consisting of specialists in the areas of administration and the design of SBC-21 training events. Intensive training was provided on how

Page Number: Page 2 of 3

Agency: GCOM

Title: Report on Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century

Financial Implications: None

to conduct training events on-site for partner congregations. A revised training manual was introduced to guide lay/clergy teams in the design of training events built around the goals of the Initiative.

◆ **The Partner Congregations**

By the end of quadrennium, development of over 700 partner congregations located in rural, urban, and suburban areas needing assistance and resources. Training models for partner churches were designed around (a) vibrant & varied worship; (b) leadership development; (c) faith formation; (d) mission and outreach; and (e) planning & administration.

◆ **Great Event Training Model**

Great Event Training Model, a national gathering of pastors and laity, was developed and introduced in 2003 as an alternative model for enlisting partner congregations at the beginning of the process of developing a covenant relationship with congregation resource centers.

◆ **Follow-Up Component**

Developed and implemented a follow-up component designed to engage with partner churches on specialized needs at the partner church site, evaluate learnings and encourage continuing collaboration with the congregation resource center. Part-time consultant hired to guide work of follow-up strategies.

◆ **Communication & Interpretation of SBC-21**

Production of SBC-21 video on how the initiative has impacted partner congregations and community. Website created so that lay & clergy could log on and read about the initiative and link to other related web sites and resources. SBC-21 newsletters and other church publications celebrated and widely disseminated the stories of congregational renewal, bold and meaningful ministries. New visions, new life, new beginnings, and new stories of hope and possibilities are emerging from SBC21 training experiences and follow up activities.

The general agencies and commissions of The United Methodist Church worked closely with the initiative as they served as consultants to the Coordinating Committee. In this relationship, they provided many services, collaborated with SBC-21 in its programs and training and utilized in their own meetings and programs the resources of SBC-21. Black Methodists for Church Renewal, jurisdictions and annual conferences were also energized and involved in the initiative.

Financially supported by an action of General Conference in the amount of \$2,080,000, SBC-21 is a Special Project for the Advance for Christ and His Church.

The initiative is intended as a gift to the denomination. It is built on the core value that Christ is our Center for Hope, Healing, and Wholeness. The work of the initiative is grounded in the scripture, history and traditions of The United Methodist Church and a Black people with a strong history and faith. Using our God-given gifts to provide leadership to strengthen Black churches in particular, all churches in general, is a model of faithful stewardship.

Page Number: Page 3 of 3

Agency: GCOM

Title: Report on Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century

Financial Implications: None

All that has been planned and accomplished is within the guidelines and mandate of the United Methodist Social Principles. This initiative is fulfilling Christ's mission in the life of The United Methodist Church.

Signed: _____
Bishop Edward W. Paup, President

Signed: _____
Daniel K. Church, General Secretary