



MISSIONARY SUNDAY (MISSION WORK AT HOME)

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Sunday, October 4, 2009

**Darrin Frisby, Guest Cultural Resource Commentator and
Bernice Johnson Reagon, Lectionary Team Cultural Resource Commentator**

Scripture – James 1:26-27

I. Introduction

The James scripture is very clear on practices that keep one in resonance with God. Upon reading that discipling the tongue was important, two traditional songs came to mind:

You better mind, you better mind

You got to give an account at the judgment, you better mind.

You better mind how you talk

You better mind what you talking about
You got to give an account at the judgment, you better mind...

Then there is the spiritual that usually begins, "Guide my feet while I run this race," but also has a stanza that says:

Guide my tongue, while I run this race
Guide my tongue, while I run this race
Guide my tongue, while I run this race
Oh I don't want to run this race in vein...

It is interesting that, in our scriptural lesson, service to those in distress, which most would understand as mission-at-home work, comes *after* the caution to "mind one's tongue." Self-deception and talk that pollute the world around you are dangerous. There is here the idea that minding your tongue and providing assistance and support to those near you are both ways to stay in good religious health. I am reminded, as I write this offering, of the sermon preached by Reverend Doctor Ruben Tendai on the first Sunday in 2009, when he told us that as a church we should remember that the church is not just for those in good standing within the membership. The church has to also be opened to serve those whom we do not know, especially those in trouble and in need of support, those that might be outside of that which is acceptable.

II. Terms

Etymology of Mission

The term "mission" is from the Latin *missionem*, "the act of sending," dating back to 1598, originally referencing the practice of Jesuits sending members abroad. The "diplomatic sense of 'body of persons sent to a foreign land on commercial or political business' is from 1626. In Amer. Eng., sometimes 'an embassy' (1805);" and "meaning 'dispatch of an aircraft on a military operation' (1929, Amer. Eng.)."¹

Etymology of Compassion

From the Old French dating from 1340, compassion, from the Latin *compassionem* (nom. *compassio*) means "sympathy," from *compassus*, "*com-*" means "together" and *pati* "to suffer" suggesting togetherness with suffering.²

Lean on Me

Sometimes in our lives we all have pain
We all have sorrow
But if we are wise
We know that there's always tomorrow
Lean on me, when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend
I'll help you carry on
For it won't be long
'Til I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on...

Please swallow your pride
If I have things you need to borrow
For no one can fill those of your needs
That you don't let show
Lean on me, when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend
I'll help you carry on
For it won't be long
'Til I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on

If there is a load you have to bear
That you can't carry
I'm right up the road
I'll share your load
If you just call me

So just call on me brother, when you need a hand
We all need somebody to lean on
I just might have a problem that you'd understand
We all need somebody to lean on

Lean on me when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend
I'll help you carry on
For it won't be long
Till I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on
Lean on me.³

III. Covenant Baptist Church Mission Statement

The concept of providing for those within close proximity is provided in the mission statement of the Covenant Baptist Church whose pastors are Reverend Dennis Wiley and Reverend Christine Wiley. The church is located in Washington, D.C. The mission statement says in part:

God calls this church to be a progressive witness for Jesus Christ, a creative model of Christian worship, a loving example of Christian fellowship, and a humble servant to our sisters and brothers in the community, the nation, and the world in which we live. In word and deed, we are committed to continuing Jesus' ministry of spiritual and physical liberation to the disadvantaged, the weak, and the downtrodden. We understand that our role is both priestly and prophetic as we strive to heal personal hurts and pains, as well as challenge social structures and systems that oppress God's children wherever they may be, and that prevent them from realizing their full potential.⁴

IV. Central Union Mission in Washington, DC

Native Washingtonian Reverend George D. Frisby, Jr., associate minister at First Baptist Church of Highland Park, in Lanham, Maryland, accepted the call to Christian discipleship in his early teens. He had also felt a divine calling on his life but he ran away from it as long as he could. “I always thought that I would hear this deep voice of God call me, if I was to become a preacher.” Instead, one night in 1987, it was an unmistakable and unceasing nudge while he was sleeping that forced him out of bed. “Yes Lord what would you have me to do?” was his reply. He then spoke with his pastor, Reverend James McCord at the time, and enrolled in the Washington Bible College.

Upon completing school, he was assigned to serve as spiritual advisor to the deaconess’ and the missionaries. At that time, the main duties of the missionaries were within the church. Reverend Frisby endeavored to get the entire church involved with mission through training and attending missionary conferences. One Saturday in 1991, he was asked to fill in and preach at the Central Union Mission in Washington, D.C. Established in 1884, Central Union Mission is one of America’s oldest social service ministries. The ministry began as an outreach to wayward men, many of them Civil War veterans. Strong church support through the twentieth century enabled the Central Union Mission to purchase and later build larger facilities. Central Union’s purpose is to aid in the transformation of the people they serve so that these people will become Godly, productive members of society. The mission does this by meeting their physical, spiritual, and emotional needs and by showing a sincere spirit of integrity and Christian love in everything they do. By displaying excellence in all aspects of this ministry, they believe they honor God and inspire the people they serve as well as the community, donors, and volunteers. After initially preaching there, Reverend Frisby spearheaded the effort that led First Baptist Church of Highland Park into a commitment to work at Central Union Mission the first Saturday of every month. The church has not missed one date in seventeen years.⁵



The Services of the Central Union Mission—In the course of a year (from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008) the Central Union Mission has provided, with the support of faithful partners:

Meals

152,275 nutritious meals were provided for men, women, children and families and included daily meals, groceries, luncheons and special event celebrations.

Outreach to Children

374 children attended a week-long summer camp at Camp Bennett.

1410 children received backpacks filled with school supplies.

1,337 children received Christmas presents.

Household Support

4,916 families and individuals in need received household support through the distribution of clothing, furniture & household goods.

Residential Recovery Services

341 men received assistance in overcoming addictions and other life controlling issues through the eighteen month Spiritual Transformation program.

50,288 men received emergency shelter and bedding through the Overnight Guest Program.

Ministry and Spiritual Transformation Program

3,783 counseling services and home and hospital visits were provided for individuals, groups and families.

Medical and Legal Services

625 individuals received professional services through health fairs, physical exams, eye exams and private medical and legal consultations.

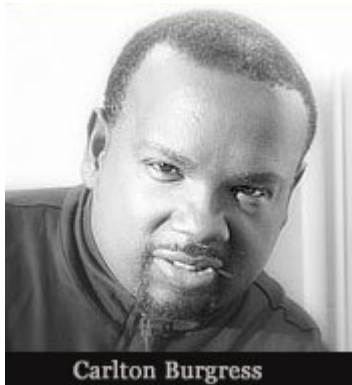
Educational Services

456 adults received instruction in English as a second language, literacy competency and preparation for the GED (General Educational Development) test.

Community Development Projects

Last year, Central Union Mission played a significant role in impacting other community development efforts through collaboration with national and local organizations such as World Vision DC, Feed the Children, Christ on the Mall, Fannie Mae Walk for the Homeless, First Baptist Church and McFarland Middle School.⁶

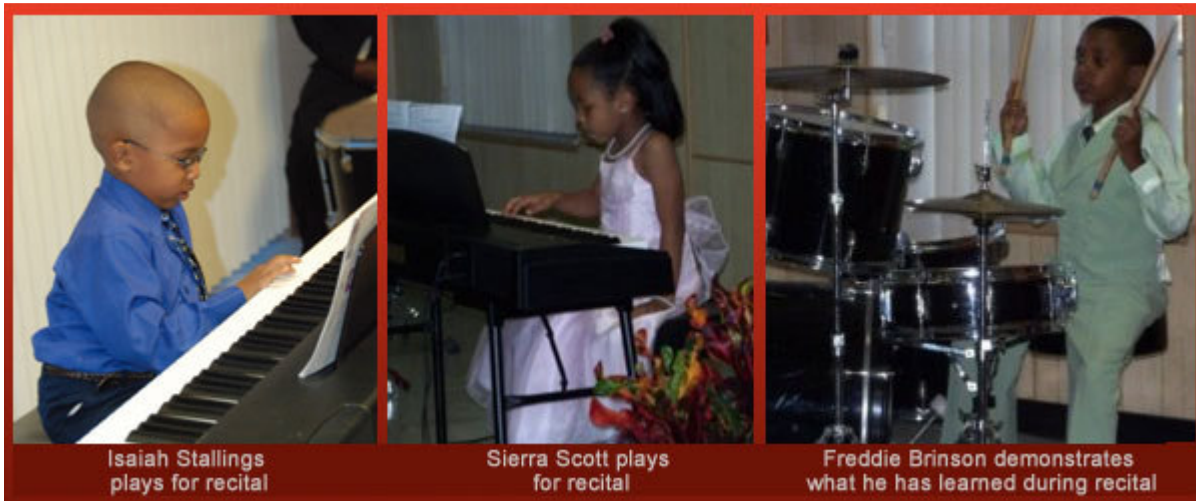
V. Carlton Burgess: Music and Mission Work at Home⁷



Grammy award winning songwriter, Carlton Burgess, was born in Tampa, Florida, December 20, 1965. He knew as a young child that he wanted to play gospel music, specifically for the Church. In his earlier days, he attended church services where his mother, who still plays for churches today, was a musician. Having studied western classical and gospel genres (under the tutelage of the legendary Milton Bingham), Burgess plays piano and organ with a divine anointing.

Carlton has spent much of his adult life in Washington, D.C. In Washington, he worked for Metropolitan Baptist Church, Bethel AME in Baltimore, the Bible Based Fellowship Church, and Grace World Outreach Assembly of God in Brooksville, Florida. Carlton is nationally known as a Worship and Praise leader. Like many church musicians, Burgess serves several congregations. Currently, he serves as interim organist at the historic Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Arlington, Virginia and as choral consultant or special project consultant at Divinity Christian Church in Los Angeles, California.

The Burgess Music Group - In spite of an intensive multi-city commitment as a pianist and organist, Carlton Burgess goes beyond the concert hall and church to reach young people, giving them opportunities within their communities to unwrap gifts of talents that they may have never realized if someone did not provide a way to identify and nurture their untapped potential. Burgess facilitates those opportunities through the Burgess Music Group, a fully staffed music studio based in Tampa, Florida. Additionally, he conducts a summer camp for youth and children, offering vocal and instrumental training as well as other classes in other art forms. Each summer the camp concludes with a music production and recital, allowing both burgeoning and trained students to showcase their talents. This project has also birthed a string ensemble comprised of violinists.



Although his main work has been in the arts, a few years ago Burgess began to reach out to the homeless. Along with his mother and a limited staff, with out-of-pocket and donated funds, he provides bagged lunches for those in need in his community. In an unusual move, Burgess used the proceeds from his critically acclaimed *Carlton Burgess Christmas Melodies*, an instrumental holiday CD, to help fund this outreach effort. In 2009, Carlton produced *Solitude*, a collection of his favorite hymns; the proceeds from this project will benefit the scholarship fund he started which allows young people to take music lessons or participate in the summer camp.



VI. When a Church Embraces a City: West Angeles Church of God in Christ



As we move through the opening decade of the twenty-first century, there are within the African American faith community a number of churches that are distinguished not only by their membership size (equal to the population of some small cities or towns), but they are also marked by their mission work. One such sacred community is the West Angeles Church of God In Christ, pastored by Reverend Charles E. Blake, now also the Presiding

Bishop of the Church of God In Christ, believed to be a six million member denomination.

In 1969, he began his work at West Angeles with fifty members. Today, the West Angeles Cathedral houses the main five thousand seat sanctuary as well as the outreach ministries of the church. The church provides mission help to its members, the community in which it is located and in Africa.

About West Angeles Church

West Angeles Church of God In Christ was founded in 1943 by C.E. Church, Sr. The first church was located inside a small store front on Vermont Avenue in the heart of Los Angeles. A new home was built at 3501 West Adams Boulevard in 1955.

As of 2009, the membership of West Angeles Church of God In Christ exceeds 21,000 members. The church has been recognized as one of the fastest growing churches in the nation, with extensive ministry and outreach services, including television and radio broadcasts. West Angeles is distinguished by the scope, quality and reach of the services it provides its members and the Los Angeles community.

Some Ministries of West Angeles COGIC:

Bible College

This college is a degree-granting school for those who want a deeper understanding of the Bible or who desire to minister in an urban environment.

Community Development Corporation

This is the non-profit economic development division of West Angeles COGIC.

Counseling Center

The center offers private sessions, seminars, conferences and support groups from a Christian perspective.

Food Services and Wedding Department

This department provides dining services and wedding event coordination for the church and community.

Performing Arts Theater

The theater provides quality entertainment in a one-of-a-kind setting and offers a venue

to support Christian artists.

Prayer Ministries

This ministry is composed of persons who pray for West Angeles members, the Los Angeles community and the world.

Skid Row Ministry

This ministry provides food, clothing and social service assistance to the homeless.

Young Adult Ministries

This ministry assists Christians in their twenties and thirties in reaching spiritual maturity.

Youth Department

This department works to lead a new generation to Jesus through programs and services for youth under age eighteen.

A song that sums up this moment on our liturgical calendar says, “If I can Help Somebody as I travel along, then my living will not be in vain.”

If I Can Help Somebody

If I can help somebody
As I travel along
If I can help somebody
With a word or song
If I can help somebody
From doing wrong
My living shall not be in vain.

My living shall not be in vain
My living shall not be in vain
If I can help somebody
While I'm singing this song
My living shall not be in vain.⁸

Notes

1. “Mission.” Online Etymology Dictionary. Online location: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=mission&searchmode=none> accessed 4 April 2009
2. “Compassion.” Online Etymology Dictionary. Online location: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=Compassion&searchmode=none> accessed 4 April 2009
3. “Lean on Me.” Lyricsmode. 2009. Online location: http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/b/bill_withers/lean_on_me.html accessed 4 April 2009
4. Covenant Baptist Church. Online location: <http://www.cbcwdc.org/> accessed 4 April 2009

5. Frisby, George D. Personal Interview. 10 December 2008.
6. Central Union Mission. Online location: http://missiondc.org/about/who_we_serve.html accessed 4 April 2009
7. Burgess, Carlton. Personal Interview. 15 January 2009. Special thanks to Carlton Burgess for the use of the images that concern his work.
8. "If I Can Help Somebody." [Lyricsmode](http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/m/mahalia_jackson/if_i_can_help_somebody.html). 2009. Online location: http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/m/mahalia_jackson/if_i_can_help_somebody.html accessed 4 April 2009