18th Annual Christian Leadership School

Second Arnold Missionary Baptist Church

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The African American Church and Social Justice

COPP# 8035

Textbook: “To Serve This Present Age: Social Justice Ministries in the Black Church”

Instructor: Bro. Edward Chisolm

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” Hosea 4:6
Introduction

What is the nature and mission of the black church? Is it an instrument of salvation (saving souls) through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Is the mission that of transforming the social order to improve the lives of black people? Maybe it’s both! If so, how so? In this course, we will investigate the lives, theology and methods of the great servants of God who dedicated their lives in the struggle for liberation of people. We will discuss the role of the church in this struggle. We will look closely at the emerging black church during slavery, pre and post reconstruction, and now in these modern times. With the ending of the historic presidency of Barak Obama, and the advent of a new wave of racial polarization and white nationalism with the election of Donald J. Trump as president, the country is truly divided on many fronts.

One of the major attributes of God is that of justice. God believes in justice. When it comes to social justice, God is in support of that as well. Social means relational, as with people. God cares about relationship among his people. Most of the 10 commandments deal with justice between individuals. The Bible teaches us that “the just shall live by faith.” In the Constitution we are reminded about... “One nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.” Justice carries the connotation of fairness and equality. God desires people to be treated with dignity and fairness.

Jesus in the New Testament was clear that he left the church in charge of this world. If there is going to be any kind of social justice in the world, it will come from the Church, the people of God. The church must lead the way. The Black church in particular must lead the way. The black church is in such a unique position historically and experientially to provide leadership and guidance. Who better than the black church and its people who have faced evils of white racism and social degradation to instruct humanity about God. Who better than the black church to ease the tension between the mandate of personal salvation and the demands of transforming the social order and achieving justice and equality. It is not an either or position for the black church. It’s all of the above. Jesus said it best, upon this rock, I build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Not has or will ever prevail against the church. The church as a living organism has demonstrated how resilient it is to face whatever challenge or obstacle it must deal with. That was the case before and that’s the case now. Now more than ever before we need the black church to be a guardian of the culture and the avenue to the afterlife. If not now, when? If not us, then who?
Course Objective

By the end of the course, students will have a greater appreciation for the mission of the black church in our history as well as the current role it plays in our continued quest for freedom, justice, and equality.

The Course seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the historical and current role of the black church?
2. What’s the difference between social justice and social service?
3. What is the relevance of the black church in light of current social and political unrest?
4. Does the black church today have the capacity/wherewithal to effectively deal with the myriad of issues prevalent in the black community?
Course Outline

Session 1 (Foundational Study)
- Welcome & Introductions
- Review Course Goals & Questions
- Word Study
- What do we mean by Social Justice
- By the Numbers
- Homework Assignment

Session 2 Social Justice & The Black Church-Historical Perspective
- The Black Church: Past & Present
- Spread of Black Churches
- Social Justice During the Civil Rights Era
- A Word on Black Theology
- Homework Assignment

Session 3 Considering Common Justice Issues for the 21st Century
- By the Numbers
  - Mass Incarceration: The New Jim Crow
  - Police Brutality vs. Black Lives Matter
  - Putting the Public back in Public Education
  - Health & Wellness
- The Black Church Relevant or Irrelevant
- Social Justice Ministry Model

Session 4 The Black Church in the Present Age
- Recap Nights 1-3
- Q & A/Discussion
- Class Presentations