

Annual Meeting: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Memphis, Tennessee

September 6-11, 2009

Report by: Deacon Harold & Deaconess Dayus Metts

Congdon Street Baptist Church

The official opening of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.(NBC) was Tuesday, September 8, 2009. It was our first trip to a national convention and it was an awesome experience. Activities began on Sunday, September 6th, with registration on Monday, September 7th. There was great excitement on Monday, as President Obama was scheduled to address the “Parent Body”.

The fashion and dress of the attendees was outstanding and matched the honor and prestige of the event. The colors and styles were rich and reflected the geographical areas of those in attendance. The ladies had fantastic hats of all colors, styles, and sizes to match their dresses, shoes, and hand bags. The men were handsomely dressed, with those from the Southwest having cowboy hats and boots to complement their suits. Some jackets and vest were expertly designed with the influence of leather.

The history at Congdon Street Baptist Church parallels that of NBC, that is also made up of African American Baptist Churches from across the nation with rich histories. We heard from an old preacher from Mississippi, how racism and discrimination during the “Jim Crow” era he lived and survived, meant that there was no education available for the Negro/Colored children. The only schooling his particular community received was from a one room school house attached to their church that went up to the 6th grade, funded by NBC. The survival of our people and the role of the Black Church are intricately interwoven. NBC played a major role. They supported many Bible Colleges to train preachers to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and keep hope alive in the Black Community.

Annual Meeting: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Memphis, Tennessee

September 6-11, 2009

Report by: Deacon Harold & Deaconess Dayus Metts

Congdon Street Baptist Church

Our experience was very spiritual and informative. We were blest by our participation and it was an honor to represent our church. NBC is a great resource and we need to fully take advantage of our membership with them. Our connection with them is as follows: NBC is of course at the national level; then at the Regional level is the New England Convention (started at Congdon Street Baptist Church), under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Cotten; then there is the United Baptist Convention (UBC for Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maine, and New Hampshire), under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Gady; and locally is the Greater Baptist Fellowship under the leadership of Rev. Balark, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Prov., RI . It is important to note that NBC has direct connection with the Obama Administration on Faith Based Initiatives (health care, prison ministry, etc.). Their foreign missions efforts are outstanding yet based on world wide poverty and needs they need more help and support.

Rev. Dr. William J. Shaw, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was the out going President who had provided outstanding leadership for ten years (two 5 year terms). He officially opened the convention on Tuesday, September 8th. He asked those present, “Where is the mind of the church today in becoming a mission driven church?” He referenced Acts 13. He acknowledged the “spirit of rejection”, but admonished the preachers and church leaders present by saying, “...God gave you the assignment, stay centered...it comes with the territory...they rejected Jesus.” He wanted us to turn to the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. In referencing Isaiah 42 he said, “Be a light to the Gentiles”, concerning darkness remember “God shows up in darkness...He is the light.” Concerning personalities in all fields (even preachers) he said that “anyone can illuminate

Annual Meeting: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Memphis, Tennessee

September 6-11, 2009

Report by: Deacon Harold & Deaconess Dayus Metts

Congdon Street Baptist Church

a room, but it takes God's power to illuminate a soul. The church is in the world, but not to entertain the world. The challenge today is that we can't go out on a mission unless we know who we are representing." A question he raised concerned the church's place in the world and control issues. His response was, "It should be God not the culture like we see today... Years ago we loved people and used things (tools, jewelry, clothes, etc.), but today we love things and use people. We need to change our behavior...have a mission driven behavior...Jesus wept over Jerusalem (injustice, poverty, hypocrisy, self righteousness) and then he entered it to die. If it breaks God's heart it should break our heart...we must die to our things and selves." People now go to the government to meet their needs where years ago they relied on our churches, he mentioned; and concerning our churches he said, "We need to get up off our blessed assurance...get to the mission." He used Paul and Barnabas as examples and reminded all present (he was preaching now) that "...the blood of Jesus will never lose its power." The church must be one and he referenced John 17 as he closed.

Dr. Shaw restored the integrity of NBC after the previous president disgraced himself and NBC after being caught in infidelity and corruption. Dr. Shaw explained how Dr. Lyons, the former president, was seeking forgiveness and was running for president, again, (we received a telephone call in July on his behalf and spoke to Dr. Lyons on the telephone in a 3 way conversation). Dr. Lyons camp missed the deadline, didn't follow established rules of NBC; and he petitioned their board and was denied. Dr. Lyons then initiated litigation in an attempt to stop Thursday's election.

Annual Meeting: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Memphis, Tennessee

September 6-11, 2009

Report by: Deacon Harold & Deaconess Dayus Metts

Congdon Street Baptist Church

Wednesday, September 8, 2009, the candidates and their running mates addressed convention members. There was a cloud over this part of the convention and Dr. Lyons ran on the platform of forgiveness and presented his goals. The Rev. Dr. Julius Scruggs, from Alabama, and second in command on the Shaw team was the other candidate. He ran on trust and integrity and asked everyone in the room who was forgiven to raise their hand. Everyone did so the point was that we are all forgiven. Then he went to the scripture in Luke about the “Prodigal Son” (who wanted an early inheritance, rejected and left his father, got caught up in a sinful life style and lost all his money and friends, and starving returned home to his father who he had rejected). Dr. Scruggs pointed out that this son returned home humble and wanted his father to treat him as one of his servants. Dr. Scruggs further pointed out that he did not return home demanding that what he had before be restored.

The speculation was that it would be a close election and the litigation left a cloud over this morning session. We prayed about the candidates and based upon what we heard and felt, we decided to support and vote for Dr. Scruggs. The election was held Thursday, September 10th. The final vote tally was Lyons 924 votes and Scruggs 4,086. Needless to say, the media was there, but they didn’t get the story they anticipated and wanted. God is good. We will pray for Dr. Scruggs and NBC and their continued success with future endeavors!

The devil is a liar and the dark cloud over the convention that morning quickly dissipated and we witnessed some great preaching, music and singing. There were four sessions during the day. The a.m. session was from 8:30 to 12:00 noon, after lunch it

Annual Meeting: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Memphis, Tennessee

September 6-11, 2009

Report by: Deacon Harold & Deaconess Dayus Metts

Congdon Street Baptist Church

went from 2:00 p.m. to 3:45; the early evening session went from 7: 15 -9:00 pm; and the late night session went from 10:00 p.m. to 12:00 midnight. We attended the a.m., after lunch, and late night sessions. We now know what Rev. Fulton means when he prays concerning being an empty pitcher before a full fountain. The preachers that lead the devotionals and expositions ended up preaching before the preachers scheduled to preach the actual sermon. They were all awesome preachers and many could sing, too. One day we heard seven or more sermons and they were all great, and our cup ran over.

This convention was for Pastors and their spouses, ushers/nurses, youth, deacons, trustees, and other church leaders and members. Pastors have a challenging job and many times come under spiritual attack from someone in the leadership or membership in their congregations. As Dr. Shaw did earlier, the convention was geared to encourage pastors to stay true to the mission of the church, for them to trust God. Our churches must not lose sight of the mission Jesus gave; as it's more than the ABC's of attendance, buildings, and cash. When rejected and persecuted, Jesus was grounded because he knew his mission. When we face rejection and spiritual attack as church leaders we should not be surprised and must stay grounded on the charge Christ gave to the church and remember His promises. One of the many scriptures referenced in this regard was John 16: 33, ***“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”***

Tuesday, we went to dinner during the early evening session, but attended the 10:00 pm. to Midnight service. We heard one of the greatest sermons ever, I thought, until Dr. Adolf, from Texas gave his sermon about the bailout plan. We brought the

Annual Meeting: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Memphis, Tennessee

September 6-11, 2009

Report by: Deacon Harold & Deaconess Dayus Metts

Congdon Street Baptist Church

DVD. We also brought the DVD of Rev. Frank Ray, from Tennessee, another dynamic preacher, as we only attended one late night session. Many of the preachers were preacher's preachers. I took notes on all the sermons.

On Thursday we met Sister Katie R. Burke, from the People Institutional Baptist Church in Seattle Washington. Their pastor was retiring after decades of committed service and she mentioned that their church has never removed a pastor in its entire history. She invited us if we ever visit the area and introduced us to her church family present.

Thursday, afternoon we were given a presentation by Mr. Joshua DuBois, Director of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, from the White House, who flew in that morning from Washington, D.C. He wanted the health care debate to move from a negative to a moral issue, and mentioned how Dr. Shaw and NBC has helped shape national policy. They are partners with the Baptist Faith Based Initiatives (we need to learn and do more in our area), and admonished us that "...social issues can't be solved in Washington alone." His office is a link to galvanize the faith based community.

Mr. DuBois cited the bad health in our community, "...17% of African Americans don't have health insurance. He gave the goals of the President's Health Care Plan:

1. Stability and security for those who have insurance (contrary to political rhetoric if you have insurance your plan won't change);
2. Affordability for those who don't have health insurance; and
3. Keep the cost under control.

Contrary to the myths being promoted by the opposition he wanted us to know that nothing in the President's plan will change our coverage; Insurance Companies can't drop or limit coverage (prescriptions or for preexisting conditions); Insurance Companies

Annual Meeting: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Memphis, Tennessee

September 6-11, 2009

Report by: Deacon Harold & Deaconess Dayus Metts

Congdon Street Baptist Church

can't limit preventive treatment (example: mammograms, colonoscopies, etc.); and those who have no insurance will be put into a new exchange (small business groups can shop around). He took exception to the fear tactics being promoted and mentioned that the answer is “**No**” to killing the elderly; and coverage for illegal immigrants. He mentioned that they want to keep insurance companies honest, not put them out of business; and keep the cost low. The Obama Administration's goal is not to add to the national deficit, and plans on paying for this by stopping waste and streamlining cost. This is a moral issue beyond politics and he urged the faith and health organizations and churches to get active. He requested that we return to our home churches, let people know the facts, pray and support the president, lobby our Congressional Delegation, and advocate at the local level. Mr. DuBois excused himself, as he had to catch his plane back to Washington to continue his efforts for the administration on health care.

Thursday night in addition to election results, **the Foreign Mission Report** was given by Rev. Joe Albert Bush, from N.Y. NBC's efforts goes across cultural and geographical boundaries. They have missions in West Africa, Liberia, the Sudan, Barbados, Haiti (they recently got approval from the local government), the Caribbean, Nicaragua, and other countries in Africa that I can't pronounce or spell. There is an industrial mission to restore facilities destroyed by civil war, dig new wells for good drinking water, and dig latrines for bathroom needs. Phase 1 was completed to open some schools, however, they need more books and supplies, furniture for classrooms and dormitories (bed, small desk, and a chair). They also need transportation to bring students to school, as one small van has to make 8 or 9 trips, and buses are needed to

Annual Meeting: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Memphis, Tennessee

September 6-11, 2009

Report by: Deacon Harold & Deaconess Dayus Metts

Congdon Street Baptist Church

transport hundreds of students. They need roofs on their schools because the rainy season last 3 to 4 months.

Health centers are being built but with the HIV epidemic, and other childhood diseases and with limited or no vaccines or medicines, they need so much more. Full time medical doctors are needed.

Church growth is taking place and they need worship centers and vehicles (again, also needed for schools and hospitals that are directly connected to church work). There are 528 Churches and only 82 pastors who receive \$50 a month. The pastors have several churches that they shepherd. NBC took up a collection for their Foreign Missions who desperately need help. Rev. Bush asked for prayer and financial support. Rather than put a few dollars in the bucket being passed around, we were so touched by the presentation that we gave a \$50 check.

This presentation was followed by Rev. Ralph West of Texas, at the Brook Hollow Baptist Church, who has 21,000 members. He was awesome, a preacher's preacher. His sermon came from 2 Corinthians 2: 12,13, "A Door Open For a Moment". It had to do with opportunities that come and go sometimes in a flash; and open and closed doors. He tied his sermon expertly to the presentation we had just heard about Foreign Missions and mentioned vs. 12, where there is an open door to preach the gospel and verse 13 where he said that we "...ought to be disturbed by this open door..."

I also left the convention center and went to another session on "Prison Ministry" at the Marriot Hotel in one of their conference rooms, while Dayus went to a session for the Women's Auxiliary. She reported that it opened with prayer, song, and there was a

Annual Meeting: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Memphis, Tennessee

September 6-11, 2009

Report by: Deacon Harold & Deaconess Dayus Metts

Congdon Street Baptist Church

sermon. Each region/state was introduced (very few from our region) and representatives were asked to stand and be recognized. There were women as far away as the Caribbean. Many of the groups had outfits that were color coordinated. The Texans all had on yellow cow girl hats, while others had red, blue and other matching outfits. Various convention initiatives were mentioned and a report was given about the money raised by the women to support them, including Foreign Missions. I met many women from all over the USA and the Caribbean, who were regular church goers and working people, who plan for and save for this trip yearly.

The moderator for the prison ministry session was Rev. Dr. Grady Scott, from Tucson, Arizona. African Americans are only 5.4% of the population in the United States, but we represent 45 to 50 % of the prison population.

The formal meeting was chaired by Rev. Anthony Kelley, M. Div., Organizer, Pastor and Teacher, Greater First Church-Baptist, East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana. He is nationally known with contacts in Washington in this field and he has written several books (2 mentioned but I can only remember “Amazing Grace The Storm is Passing Over”). I learned about the millions of dollars that are available for re-entry programs for ex-offenders for employment and housing. There was a dynamic program called “Project Village”. Rev. Kelley stated that this is the “most significant challenge” for our community. One minister very active in her part of the country mentioned having “Prison Ministry” or “Recovery Day” at our churches. They requested help at our State Conventions. As they sought donations for this ministry it was said, “You can’t sit high and give low.” I had to leave before they ended, but was so touched that I sent a \$50

Annual Meeting: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Memphis, Tennessee

September 6-11, 2009

Report by: Deacon Harold & Deaconess Dayus Metts

Congdon Street Baptist Church

check to Dr. Scott, when I returned home. I was in awe by the depth of NBC's

involvement in prison ministry nationally and the resources available. They didn't tape this session and I don't know if I could have afforded another tape any way.

There were a myriad of booths selling religious books, Sunday school curriculum and materials, sermons and you name it. Marketing representatives were available for those interested in designing, building and furnishing a church. A national realtor's association representative was providing materials for refinancing loans at low interest rates. We shared this material with Deacon Green, our Trustee Chairman. There was also a large shopping area that made custom suits while you waited. Stylish preacher's robes were for sale, as was ladies hats in the \$200 to \$300 dollar range, as well as other religious and nonreligious wares. I brought a "T" shirt that had a smiley face that read, "God has been Good 2 me."

We left for home early Friday morning and the tapes on the Health Care Presentation and Foreign Missions were not available Thursday, night. We will order these 2 tapes and show them at some type of forum in our church community (we purchased a total of 4 tapes at \$19.89 @, and wish we could afford more, as it's that important given the poor health of our community and the poverty in Africa and else where).

The highlights of the trip for us were as follows:

- Becoming more aware about NBC and our need to stay connected to this branch of our church family/affiliation and tap into the spiritual and political resources they have available nationally. We must become more active in our regional and local conventions (New Eng. Convention, United Baptist Convention (UBC), and Greater Baptist Fellowship).
- We were blest by some great musicians, singers, and preaching.

Annual Meeting: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Memphis, Tennessee

September 6-11, 2009

Report by: Deacon Harold & Deaconess Dayus Metts

Congdon Street Baptist Church

- We were encouraged to remember the mission Jesus gave to the church, and staying on the battle field for our Lord.
- We thank God for the New Leadership of The Rev. Dr. Julius Scruggs.
- It was awesome visiting the Loraine Motel, where Dr. King was assassinated and met eternity, that has been made into a fantastic Civil Rights Museum (we never made it to see Grace Land and Elvis, however, we heard it was a great theme park). The memories from the Civil Rights movement and the emotions that were elicited were spell binding. You couldn't help but thank God for His grace and mercy in delivering our people; and for the role that our churches played to give us hope and aid in our survival.
- The barbecue ribs at the Neely's Restaurant were awesome. (There was a friendly argument between the brothers from Memphis and the Brothers from Kansas City, as to who has the best barbecue.)
- The NBC convention is in Kansas City, Missouri next year from September 7-10, 2010. God willing, we plan on attending, so that we can sample and be the judge for ourselves, as to who has the best barbecue. We started saving for the trip already.
- Who knows, but perhaps our next pastor will come from this NBC (I'll mention this potential resource to our Search Committee)

Congdon Street Baptist Church is not an island. We need to stay active and participate with all of our Affiliates (American Baptist & the National Baptist Convention). We must take advantage of the resources they provide to assist us with our ministry efforts. I'm reminded by what Dr. Shaw said. We need to get up off of our (____) blessed assurance, get active and carry out the "Great Commission" given to us by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In closing, we give God the Glory for such a spiritually enriching trip. It was an honor and privilege to represent our church at the National Baptist Convention and we thank our church family for their support.

Deacon Harold M. Metts

Deaconess Dayus L. Metts