



Herald-Leader/Tom Woods II

The Rev. Charles H. Smith addresses Black Church Coalition at Shiloh Baptist Church.

Support urged for church coalition

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tion's type of work "is not being done in many places in this country."

Smith, now an executive with a non-profit computer organization for churches, was the keynote speaker at the coalition's "mass meeting" to garner support for its effort to aid the poor. Formed late last year, the coalition has contributed nearly \$9,000 to aid 195 needy families, said chairman G.M. Smith, pastor of Evergreen Baptist Church.

The group has donated money to provide gas, electricity or water to 113 families, has prevented two mortgage foreclosures and 66 rent evictions and

has provided 11 utility deposits, G.M. Smith said. It works with various government agencies to screen candidates for donations and has no paid workers, he said.

"We look for people who have fallen through the cracks, so to speak, and it doesn't make any difference who they are. Race or religion has no bearing. If there's a real need, we'll help them."

G.M. Smith said this was the first time that the area's black churches "have pulled together" all denominations for a community effort. "I've been pastor of churches here for 35 years and this is one of the greatest things I've witnessed," he said. "We're providing these folks with help that

they desperately need and we're blessed by our giving. It's quite rewarding all around."

The coalition includes 21 Fayette County churches and one each from Jessamine and Clark counties. The group's fund-raising activity is in high gear now, said G.M. Smith, because winter was approaching and "there will be many families who need help to stay warm."

Charles Smith told the assembly that included pastors from several churches that "you are to be commended because churches don't work together much anymore. And preachers don't work together."

"You're reaching out to these people and showing them that there's someone who cares."

Black clergy urged to carry ministry beyond the church

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Louisville's black clergy was urged to take its ministry beyond the church — even into the White House if necessary — in the quest for equality for blacks.

The Rev. Charles H. Smith, a Baptist minister from Washington, D.C., and political director of Democratic Sen. John Glenn's presidential campaign committee, was the featured speaker yesterday at Simmons Bible College's first Founders' Day Lectures.

Speaking to an audience of mostly ministers and students, Smith said racism is still the greatest barrier to the advancement of blacks.

"We as leaders of the oppressed must never allow ourselves to slip unconsciously into the notion that this land, this nation, this Earth,



Staff Photo by Scott Goldsmith

The Rev. Charles H. Smith of Washington, D.C.: "The black church must give hope to the oppressed community."

belongs to any special, privileged group," he said.

And, he warned: "We too often resign ourselves to allowing the majority to possess the land, establish our values, carve out our turf, and manipulate our involvement."

Smith, a native of Lexington, cited recent statistics that show rising unemployment among blacks, an increase in the number of births out of wedlock, more poor households headed by females and the lack of adequate housing for poor blacks.

He said blacks are slipping further into an underclass position. And, because of this, the black church has a distinct role to play in the fight against oppression.

"While we build new churches, convene thousands of church-related meetings where millions of dollars are spent in hotel rooms and facilities and preach and sing to each other, our black communities are the victims of institutionalized genocide," he said.

Smith encouraged black churches to lead the fight against racism, unemployment, poor housing, crime and a political system that places a low priority on the needs of blacks.

"The black church must give hope to the oppressed community. It cannot escape judgment criteria for its stewardship," he concluded.

The Rev. W. J. Hodge, president of Simmons, said the lecture series, which concludes today, is being offered at the 104-year-old institution at 1811 Dumesnil St. to enhance the school's image.

"We want our students to get away from the idea that church is just in the church. Black ministers have got to be out in the community and concerned with all of the problems of the black families that we minister to," he said.

Dr. W. A. Jones, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Brooklyn, N.Y., will be the guest lecturer today at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Jones, president of the National Black Pastors Conference and former president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, will discuss preaching.