



STRENGTHENING
THE BLACK CHURCH
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

PRESS RELEASE

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National Ethnic Plan Announce 25 Year Milestone with Multiple Celebrations

(Nashville, TN) – The United Methodist Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century (SBC21) says it will kick-off commemorating 25 years of empowering and equipping Black Clergy and Lay leadership during its national conference, Shift Happens: Doing Ministry from the Right Side, December 1-2, 2021, at St. Johns Downtown Houston, TX. The Hybrid event is expected to attract 200 in-person attendees. You can find conference details and registration information @ www.sbc21.org/shifthappens.

Shift Happens is a unique teaching, learning and demonstration opportunity for multiple generations. The conference, in partnership with the UMC Black Staff Association, Black Methodist for Church Renewal (BMCR), Convocation of Black Pastors, Gammon Theological Seminary and Black Clergy Women will also include the SBC21 National Network of Young Adults Leading in Transformation experience. This conference is intended to unify and merge the voices of Black caucuses and young adults 18-35 for an experience that will offer leaders practical ways to do ministry different, increase young adult engagement and to witness fresh expressions to pivoting during and after a pandemic.

“It was 1996, 25 years ago when the General Conference body of the United Methodist Church agreed and voted that strengthening black churches in this denomination was critically important to the whole church,” said Dr. Bowie, National Executive Director. “As I look at the State of the Black Church today, it is urgent that we not just talk about doing ministry different – we must be the difference,” he said.

The conference committee said Rev. Olu Brown, pastor of one of the largest Black congregations in the UMC will be its keynote speaker. Additionally, a unique offering for In-Person attendees is the Real Time Ministry immersion experiences that are planned.

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Conference Planner Toska Medlock Lee said local congregations in the Houston area will feature how they have pivoted during the pandemic to do ministry differently and will share the strategies they have used to thrive in a pandemic. Participants will visit these locations and have a chance to learn on-site while witnessing their mission. A list of Real Time Ministry offerings can be found at www.sbc21.org/shifthappens.

To honor the legacy of 25 years, SBC21 said that anniversary plans will extend beyond the conference, and will highlight achievements and observances through May 2022. “The landmark of 25 years is momentous, said Dr. Bowie. There is so much to the SBC21 story, and we want to take every opportunity to showcase its significance mission, ministry, impact and its future.

About SBC21

Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century is a transformational learning model that enables annual conferences or local congregations to partner and share its gifts of vitality with other congregations and other annual conferences that are seeking church growth.

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