

Carlton Pearson Seeks Political Office

Carlton Pearson, a conservative Republican and founder of the 4,500-member, multiracial Higher Dimensions Family Church (HDFC) in Tulsa, wants to be the first African American mayor of Oklahoma's second largest city. Pearson's name will be on the Republican primary ballot slated for Feb. 5. If Pearson wins the primary, he will then vie for the post in the general election in March.

If elected, the author and gospel singer will make history in a city that was torn by violent race riots 80 years ago.

"The fact that I'm a conservative Afro-American, that I happen to be a pastor and bishop, and that I'm running for mayor will get the spotlight," said Pearson, 48, who is married with two young children. "If I win, that will bring national media attention to Tulsa. They're going to want to know what kind of city with a 60 percent Republican conservative voting bloc would put a black man in office."

The San Diego native relocated to Tulsa 30 years ago to attend Oral Roberts University and has served on the college's board of regents for 15 years. "Tulsa has a chance to become a model city in all aspects, including race relations, economic development, education, city government and infrastructure," Pearson said.

As mayor, Pearson would continue to lead his church, but on

what he called “a diminished basis.” According to his campaign’s Web site, Pearson is qualified for the mayoral post because he is “an experienced administrator who possesses leadership, vision, and integrity—qualities necessary for the mayor of a model, 21st century city.”

Pearson’s service to Tulsa citizens include a food bank that has provided for thousands of Tulsa’s needy for 18 years. He has also established group homes for youth, provided adoption and counseling services, conducted business consultation and entrepreneurial seminars, and developed schools, sports teams, nursing homes and a credit union.

Pearson’s annual Azusa conference has boosted Tulsa’s local economy by an estimated \$10 million each year for the last 14 years. Pearson has also been chief executive officer of HDFC, one of the largest ministries in Tulsa.

During recent presidential campaigns, Pearson has been an outspoken critic of black Christians who vote for Democrats only out of party loyalty.

—Eric Tiansay