

Showing Love and Unity

Pastor Ron Hill of Love & Unity Church of God in Christ marked Black History Month by recognizing the contributions of white abolitionists during a special service on Sunday.



February 17, 2009 – While many African-American churches across the country observe Black History Month with special skits and presentations, a black Pentecostal pastor has flipped the script to recognize the contributions of white people during an abolitionist service held Sunday.

Ron Hill, pastor of Love & Unity Church of God in Christ in Compton, Calif., told congregants it was time to honor Caucasians who protected runaway slaves and worked to abolish slavery.

“Many of those white abolitionists were born again, and some of them died trying to help black people make it to safety, and I think they should be recognized for their sacrifice,” Hill said.

Hill says God inspired him to host the service. “I was praying, and I heard the Lord say the blood of white people who gave their lives [to end slavery and racial segregation] are crying out from the ground,” he said.

He knows an abolitionist service is different from most Black History Month programs, but says he hopes to help young African-Americans understand all white people are not bad. “Who taught black people to read and write?” he asked. “A lot of [white Americans] went into the slave camps and were ostracized for doing that.

“I’m hoping to communicate to young blacks that we would not

be free had it not been for white people," he continued. "Some young blacks have the attitude that all whites are bad. But it's not true."

The pastor asked Love & Unity members to invite their white friends to church for the special service on Sunday. The church's youth ministry gave a presentation highlighting white abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the anti-slavery newspaper *The Liberator*, and John Brown, whom Frederick Douglass once said was "deeply interested in our cause, as though his own soul had been pierced with the iron of slavery."

Brown was tried and convicted of treason, and hanged in 1859.

Hill shared his vision for racial understanding on a local radio station last week, but he said only a handful of the 1,000-plus people who attended the service were white. Still, the pastor said he will host the program again next year in an effort to foster unity among blacks and whites in Compton.

In another show of racial unity, Hill— whose church is known for aggressive evangelistic efforts—is hosting evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne's Great Awakening tour at his church beginning Feb. 27. Before and during the event, teams from the church will evangelize door-to-door, on street corners and in homeless shelters. Said Hill, "We will go wherever."

-Valerie G. Lowe