

Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America Celebrate 25th Anniversary of the ‘Memphis Miracle’

The Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA) celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the “Memphis Miracle” at a Celebration of Reconciliation service in early March at the historic Mason Temple, the worldwide headquarters for the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) in Memphis, Tennessee. COGIC’s Presiding Bishop Charles Blake was at the conference in 1994 during the Memphis Miracle. At that conference, he washed the feet of the former General Superintendent of the Assembly of God Thomas Trask, a white man. During this 25th anniversary service, Bishop Blake said this can be the greatest hour of the PCCNA and challenged PCCNA to reaffirm its commitment to its founding principles.

“I believe that we are here this week to go further,” Bishop Blake said at the service. “Now, 25 years after the Memphis Miracle, there is an undeniable resurgence of racial animosity. The shootings at Mother Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, the shootings at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, the happenings in Charlottesville and so many other demonic acts herald a new and disturbing era in North America, and indeed around the world. The rise of white nationalism has ushered us into perilous times.”

Bishop Blake continued, “As people of faith, it is imperative that we renew our commitment to reconciliation; and that we aggressively shout the message of love and reconciliation in every venue from the local church pulpit to the places of power in the seat of our national government. As the leader of the largest predominantly black Pentecostal denomination in

the world, I call on the PCCNA to make a strong and unequivocal statement decrying all words and actions that are in opposition to the racial reconciliation that we were established to promote.”

He added, “This is another God moment. Let’s not let it pass. I implore you to take the initiative to pour the healing balm of love into the mortal spiritual wounds that endanger the nation that we all cherish.”

The Memphis Miracle took place Oct. 18, 1994, when a white Assemblies of God pastor washed the feet of an African-American bishop and asked for forgiveness for the sins committed by his white brothers and sisters. Pastor Don Evans washed the feet of Bishop Ithiel Clemmons at the “Pentecostal Partners: A Reconciliation Strategy for 21st Century Ministry” conference.

“Then, Bishop Blake approached Thomas Trask, General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God, and tearfully washed his feet as a sign of repentance for any animosity blacks had harbored against their white brothers and sisters,” Dr. Vinson Synan wrote in *Memphis 1994: Miracle and Mandate*. After this session, the all-white Pentecostal Fellowship of North America disbanded and PCCNA was born.

Pastor Aaron Campbell, chairman of PCCNA’s Race Relations Commission, organized the service with the PCCNA Memphis Chapter. He said his goal was to eliminate the need for a racial reconciliation commission. “Our biggest problem isn’t the race problem, but there is still a need for affirmative action. There were a lot of promises made 25 years ago. Do we keep those promises when we leave here?”

PCCNA President Jeff Farmer said 700 million people have been impacted worldwide by the Pentecostal charismatic movement since the Azusa Street revival, which was started by an African-American, William Seymour. Farmer led the attendees in

a reading of the Racial Reconciliation Manifesto. The manifesto was written by Bishop Clemmons, Leonard Lovett, Cecil M. Robeck Jr. and Harold D. Hunter and released during the conference in 1994.

PCCNA Prayer Commission Chairman Doug Small gave a stirring message about the need for the power of the Holy Spirit and prayer to bring about lasting reconciliation. Communion was served by Doug Clay, superintendent of the Assemblies of God, Bishop Blake and Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

The service kicked off the two-day PCCNA Celebrating 25 Years of Breakthrough 2019 conference. During the conference, PCCNA launched the Next Gen Cohort commission of emerging leaders in their 20s and 30s from 18 different denominations and three countries. PCCNA commissions for Acts 2 Church Health, Prayer, Communications and Media, Christian Unity, Next Gen, Race Relations and Women in Ministry met.