

Shaw to Baptist members: Look at bigger issue

*By Jenifer Phillips
Special to Sentinel-Voice*
PHILADELPHIA (NNPA) - During a rousing address to members of the National Baptist Convention USA Inc. recently, convention president Rev. Dr. William Shaw spoke of the group's accomplishments, present work and ways to approach future challenges.

Shaw referenced the 14th chapter of the New Testament book of John where Jesus' disciples ask questions of him, their future and his response, "I've been with you all this time and still you don't know me?"

Shaw appeared to be challenging listeners to question whether or not they found themselves in that passage.

"If you really want to assess a situation properly, then you take a view that is larger than right now," Shaw said. "People won't understand the National Baptist Convention unless you see all this time."

Some of "this time" dates back to Sept. 9, 1999, when Shaw was elected as the convention's 16th president. The group was still reeling from scandal after its former president, Rev. Henry Lyons, was convicted of racketeering and grand theft charges.

"What was needed for us if we were going to be able to face our future was a culture change," Shaw said.

This culture change entailed a platform, which Shaw still stands by firmly, V.I.S.A.: Vision, Integrity, Structure and Accountability.

"All this time, we've been working on programs trying to reflect what is the vision of the Christ," Shaw said.

He encouraged unity among NBC USA Inc. churches and spoke of the convention's work to increase relationships and "relate to the wider family of believers" through its recent visits with churches in Rome and Africa, and work with other Black Baptist Conventions.

"We ought to know what God is doing elsewhere," Shaw said.

"We won't know everything, but we ought to know some things."

In addition to this, Shaw spoke of the convention's stance against the war on Iraq.

"Our nation went to war on premises that were proved false and has stayed in war for reasons that are shifty," Shaw said.

He also spoke of the convention's response to Hurricane Katrina relief ef-

forts and its other work in the area of national disaster relief.

Shaw offered advice as the convention prepares to elect a new president during its 2009 annual session. "Beware of people who will lead an organization they have not followed," Shaw said.

"Who would head an organization that they sought to impede," he added to amens, hand claps and head nods.

He called for more cohe-



Rev. Dr. William Shaw

sive theology among churches and spoke against a focus on materialism:

"Jesus Christ's ministry wasn't about getting wealth and lining pockets," Shaw said.

According to a convention attendee, the Black church needed to hear Shaw's message.

"It's very important that the leadership in the Black churches get it together," said Carolyn Pierre of New Iberia, La.

Pastor J. Vincent Grove of Newark, N.J. said he was glad Shaw addressed the issue of Hurricane Katrina, and views him as a solid role model for younger pastors such as himself.

Shirley Crawford of Houston said Shaw's comments about education meant a lot to her.

"He's a good president because when he came, we were in a state of confusion,"

she said. "When Dr. Shaw came we really needed leadership."

In spite of praise and accolades, Shaw continued to point members of the convention to someone higher.

"It's still Jesus Christ only," he said. "It's still Jesus Christ always. When earth meets heaven it will still be Jesus Christ only and always."

Jenifer Phillips writes for the Philadelphia Tribune.

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