



Worldwide Church of God

# GC2 equipper

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Greetings to you all!

This issue of GC2 *equipper* addresses **Black History Month**, celebrated in the United States each February.

I am often asked, “Why *Black History Month*?” It arose, in large part, to help dispel the hurtful legacy of our long national nightmare of slavery and racism. Sadly, many still believe that some people groups (minorities in general; Blacks in particular) are inferior to others. The truth, however, is that God has, in creation, made us all of “one blood” (Acts 17:26); and, in redemption, he has included us all in the life of Jesus, who is Savior of all (Gal. 3:28).

Yet, many African Americans continue to struggle with a deeply engrained sense of inferiority. Many believe the false claim that African Americans, due to lack of intelligence, have made no important contributions to our nation’s history. *Black History Month* helps dispel this lie by highlighting the significant contributions of African Americans to our nation’s development. *Black History Month* thus celebrates our full national heritage, reflecting honor on all of our nation’s racial and ethnic groups. African American history is *our history*!

I am also often asked, “How can we celebrate *Black History Month* as a congregation?” We provide ideas in this issue, and consider the following:

- 2009 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP), founded in Niagara Falls, NY.
- 2009 is the 390<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first African slaves to this country, brought to Jamestown, VA as indentured servants.
- 2009 begins the administration of our nation’s first African American President. Whether or not Barak Obama was your choice, we can celebrate together this historic milestone without partisan politics.

I encourage all our congregations to celebrate *Black History Month* in ways that will encourage and enlighten their members, families and communities. This issue of GC2 *equipper* provides resources to help you.

All the best,

Curtis May, director, WCG Office of Reconciliation Ministries (ORM)



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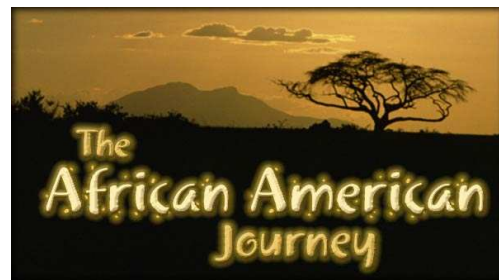
Curtis May

## Benefits of celebrating *Black History Month*



By Neil Earle  
(WCG pastor and *Reconcile* newsletter editor)

*Black History Month* celebrates the beautiful racial and ethnic diversity that God has placed within the human family, our nation, and many of our congregations. Consider three benefits from holding *Black History Month* celebrations in your congregation:



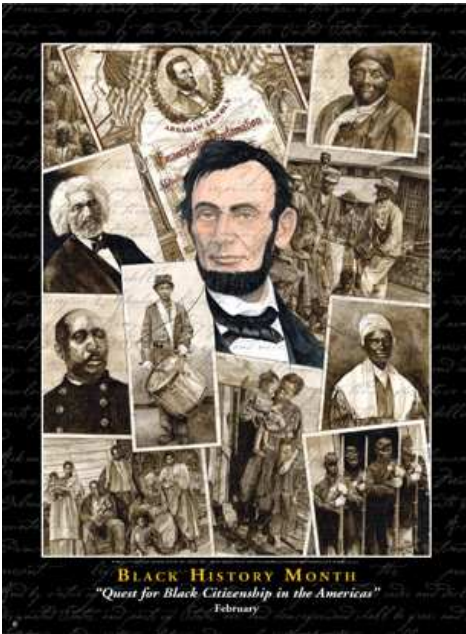
**Outreach.** Celebrations of *Black History Month* give our members special opportunity to invite to church their friends, family and neighbors who are African American or of other racial or ethnic minorities. These celebrations can meaningfully highlight these groups' significant contributions to the church and the nation at large. Within our own fellowship, we have many outstanding examples including the pioneering work of WCG leader Harold Jackson, and the service to the nation of William Hicks, a WCG Pittsburgh member, who served in World War II as one of the famed Tuskegee Airmen.

Providing such recognition provides opportunity to reach out to African Americans and other ethnic and racial minorities. One congregation that has done so successfully is Christ Community Church, a WCG congregation in Cincinnati, OH. You may contact George Hart, the congregation's pastor, at [George.Hart@wcg.org](mailto:George.Hart@wcg.org). He would be glad to share ideas. One of his members, Sandra Hamilton, commented, "Attendance at Christ Community Church swells during February."

**Education.** A WCG member in the New York City area confessed to an ORM team member that he was formerly a Ku Klux Klan member. He stated, "I found when I joined WCG in the 1960s that I did not have to change my social views very much at all." Wow! For members still locked in a cultural time warp it can be refreshing and educational to learn of the contributions that African Americans have made to our church and our nation. This can open members' minds to some grand and glorious themes of the New Testament: "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14).

**Growth.** Some object that *Black History Month* is about nothing more than being "politically correct." Others object that it unfairly singles out one minority group while ignoring others. But handled properly, these celebrations provide opportunity to honor *all* minority groups, while helping *all* members grow in the mind of Christ, who loves all equally. Here are some ways to enhance this spiritual growth:

- Meet with congregational leaders ahead of time to discuss sensitivities. Get lots of input—including from African American and other minority group leaders. Anticipate and address possible objections.
- Feature in your celebrations role models of racial reconciliation from all races (see page 3).
- Distribute follow-up literature. The article, "Evidence of Black Africans in the Bible?" by Dan Rogers may be downloaded at [www.WCG.org](http://www.WCG.org), then use the "search our site" feature. Issues of ORM's *Reconcile* newsletter may be downloaded at [www.ATimeToReconcile.org](http://www.ATimeToReconcile.org) (or call 626.650.2390 to request copies).
- Stress the Christian origin of the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Movement leaders Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Andrew Young and Medgar Evers were all Christian ministers (Dr. King's book, "Why We Can't Wait" shows how a coalition of concerned Christian ministers were instrumental in the movement).



## Ideas for celebrating *Black History Month*

By Curtis May and Neil Earle

*Black History Month* celebrations can take several forms, including lectures, films, music and ethnically themed meals. Several years ago, when I was pastor of the WCG headquarters congregation in Pasadena, CA, I used February to begin a dialogue concerning tearing down sensitive walls of division. We themed our February worship services as follows:

- Weekend one: Ethnic and Racial Reconciliation
- Weekend two: Gender Reconciliation
- Weekend three: Music Reconciliation
- Weekend four: Denominational Reconciliation

Here are other ideas and resources for *Black History Month* celebrations:

***Masters of Inventions*** – an 18-minute long film highlighting African American inventions. Google “Masters of Inventions” or “Black Inventors.” Material from the film or from the *Masters of Inventions* or *Black Inventors* websites could be used in *Black History Month* presentations.

***The Office of Reconciliation Ministries*** website at [www.ATimeToReconcile.org](http://www.ATimeToReconcile.org) offers an array of resources available for download:

- A radio interview with Curtis May, emphasizing the relevance of *Black History Month* celebrations for all American ethnic groups. Black history is U.S. history—and a time to celebrate our ***national racial and ethnic diversity***).
- Articles on racial reconciliation and related topics.
- Two ORM videos: ***Reconciliation, a Move of God*** and ***A Time to Reconcile***. The latter video is an award winner, and at 15 minutes long, it can easily be included in a worship service. If your church is not ethnically mixed, simply playing this video can be helpful and inspiring. Showing and discussing selected clips from such movies as “Driving Miss Daisy” might also be helpful.

Give ***sermons on reconciliation*** from 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Ephesians 2:11-22 or Ephesians 4:1-7.

Contact ***libraries, museums and exhibit halls*** concerning the topics of race, immigration, civil rights, etc. Most of these agencies bend over backward to help with materials and speakers.

***Present positive role models*** in the area of racial reconciliation. Some may be from your church, others from the community. Encourage presenters to be *positive* (even though there are always negatives issues). One congregation featured two Mississippians—one an Anglo American and the other an African American—both giving short sermons. One was the great grandson of slave-owners from Mississippi, the other the great-grandson of slaves. What a powerful demonstration of our reconciliation in Christ and of the power of Dr. King’s dream of racial reconciliation!

***Feature black singers, Gospel choirs and special music*** that demonstrate the power of African American worship music. Perhaps you could partner with an African American church in your area.

***Ask students in your congregation*** to report on what happens in school during this time. It might prove eye opening. Even a 5-minute long book report on the subject could be edifying.