

Marvin McMickle and James Forbes Jr. speak at first-ever cross-racial gathering to tackle racism

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [January 20, 2016](#) issue

Marvin McMickle, president of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, was one of the speakers at a conference that brought together more than 300 clergy and community leaders to address race relations.

"We're not going to be able to resolve the issues of racism alone, whether it is the black church alone or the white church alone," McMickle said. "I think both hands have to be on the plow."

The Conference of National Black Churches, founded in 1978 to bring African American denominations together, hosted the mid-December event, "The Healing of Our Nation: Race and Reconciliation," which also included leaders from mainline Protestant denominations. The three-day meeting took place in Charleston, South Carolina, with a worship service at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, where nine African Americans were killed during a Bible study in June. A white extremist, who wrote that he had hoped to "start a race war," was charged with federal hate crimes for the massacre.

James Forbes Jr., senior minister emeritus of New York City's Riverside Church and the CNBC summit's keynote speaker, said clergy are seeking solutions to the national crises of racism, police brutality, and gun violence.

"Only a collaborative effort across race lines holds any prospect for addressing the seriousness of the problem now," Forbes said.

While some predominantly white churches such as the Southern Baptist Convention and United Methodists have issued apologies for racism, Princeton University religion professor Albert J. Raboteau said recently that small, face-to-face gatherings, such as sharing meals and Bible studies, are "maybe even more important than the larger statements and apologies by denominations."

Forbes said he has developed such a Bible study guide that is based on the book of Ephesians and encourages participants to acknowledge their feelings of anger and

bitterness but also seek to foster understanding.

"I am proposing that because of what happened in Charleston, that it took place at the Bible study, faith communities, in honor of those Charleston Nine, ought to hold Bible studies in which there is for the first time a demand that the groups be multiracial," Forbes said, "and that they discuss issues about what we as individual congregations can do." —Religion News Service