

Black Baptists, college form partnership: Georgetown College in Georgetown, Kentucky

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Officials from four leading African-American Baptist conventions gathered at a historically white Baptist college in Kentucky and launched a new partnership.

Meeting at Georgetown College in Georgetown, Kentucky, the leaders agreed on an arrangement that will include archiving important African-American resources and increasing the number of minority students at the predominately white school, located near Lexington.

Georgetown president William Crouch on August 8 called the partnership an opportunity to relate to a larger segment of the Baptist family. He will promote the arrangement at national gatherings of the conventions. Likewise, convention leaders will be invited to campus regularly.

To increase the school's diversity, the college has recently added more African Americans to management and admissions positions. Georgetown officials are also soliciting funds to purchase a former church building adjacent to the campus to house sermons and other historical materials related to black Baptist ministers. Already, the college houses the Kentucky Underground Railroad Research Institute on campus in a building that once served as slave quarters.

Eric Fruge, director of college-church relations, said the Underground Railroad Research Institute and relationships built by Texas Baptist minister Joel Gregory laid the groundwork for the project with black Baptists. Gregory, who is white but often preaches in historically African-American churches, served as visiting professor at Georgetown and recently accepted a similar post at Baylor's Truett Seminary.

"Joel has been a great door-opener for us," said Fruge. "We asked him to come on and help us nurture our relationships with African Americans."

William Shaw, president of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., told the *Lexington Herald-Leader* he expects the partnership to make “the rich resources that have been resident in the black church experience” available to a larger audience. Progressive National Baptist Convention president Major Jemison also endorsed the project. –*Associated Baptist Press*