

Speakers chosen for New Baptist Covenant II gathering Nov. 17-19

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ATLANTA (ABP) — Social activists Marian Wright Edelman and Tony Campolo will join former President Jimmy Carter and seven other speakers on the program of the New Baptist Covenant II, a Nov. 17-19 gathering of diverse Baptists in Atlanta that will be linked by satellite and Internet to dozens of viewing locations around the country, including sites in San Antonio and Oklahoma City.



Rosalynn Carter

The multiracial lineup of speakers includes Carter's wife, Rosalynn, a longtime champion for mental-health research, along with two justice-system advocates and four pastors - three African-American and one Asian.

The New Baptist Covenant, started by Carter in 2008, is a loose-knit, grassroots effort to unite disparate Baptists groups in North America around a platform of progressive social and justice ministries.

Edelman is founder and president of the Washington-based Children's Defense Fund, the nation's preeminent advocacy group for disadvantaged children and families. A lawyer and civil-rights pioneer, Edelman received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, in 2002.

Campolo, who lives in suburban Philadelphia, is a sociologist, popular speaker, prolific author and former university professor. An outspoken

advocate for social justice, Campolo is also founder and president of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education.



Edelman and Campolo will speak about issues confronting American children and youth.

A former judge and an advocate for ex-offenders will address issues in the judicial and prison systems. Wendell Griffen was the first African-American partner in a major Arkansas law firm before becoming a state appeals court judge, a post he held until 2008. DeeDee Coleman, pastor of Russell Street Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit, operates a resource center for ex-offenders and focuses her efforts on job-skills training, job placement, economic development and youthful offenders.

The presidents of two prominent African-American denominations also will speak. Stephen Thurston is president of the National Baptist Convention of America, which is based in Dallas and has 3 million members. Carroll Baltimore, president of the 2.5 million-member Progressive National Baptist Convention, is an evangelist and church planter based in Gainesville, Va.

Ken Fong is senior pastor of Evergreen Baptist Church, a multiethnic American Baptist church in Los Angeles. He also is a church consultant, an author and a trustee of a drug-abuse program for Asian-Americans.

As previously announced, President Carter will be interviewed about current religious and social issues by veteran PBS newscaster Bob Abernethy, creator and host of "Religion and Ethics Newsweekly." Since leaving office in 1981, Carter has led the Atlanta-based Carter Center, a non-profit organization that promotes human rights and health care internationally. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002.

New Baptist Covenant II will originate from Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta, but most participants will gather at one of seven satellite-viewing locations in Los Angeles, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, San Antonio, Seattle, St. Louis and Washington, D.C. Many more people will watch in smaller church-based gatherings nationwide via Internet video streaming.

In addition, participants in all the locations will spread out after the concluding session Saturday, Nov. 19, to work for social causes in their local communities.

In addition to worship services and hands-on ministries, NBC II will include breakout sessions to teach strategies to work for justice, fight poverty and address other human needs.

The seven churches that will host the satellite-fed gatherings are St. John Missionary Baptist Church in Oklahoma City; Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio; Israel Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.; St. Luke Memorial Baptist Church in St. Louis; New Beginnings Christian Fellowship in Renton, Wash.; Sharon Baptist Church, Philadelphia; and Citizens of Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Compton, Calif.

The first session begins Thursday, Nov. 15, at 7 p.m. ET. In order to compensate for viewing sites in three different time zones, some sessions will be recorded and shown at more appropriate times. However, the Friday session in which Abernathy will interview President Carter will be viewed live in all time zones.

Organizers are still enlisting viewing sites for the web-streaming video. Local organizers must involve at least two churches of different denominational and ethnic makeup and conduct a service project on the third day, Nov. 19.

Other details about NBC II are being published at

www.newbaptistcovenant.org and in an e-mail newsletter available through the website.