



# Rev. Dr. M. William Howard, Jr.

## Bethany Baptist Church

From his early life in Americus, Georgia to the present, M. William Howard, Jr. has sought to apply his faith toward transforming the human condition.

As the elected youth leader of the Sumter County (GA) Voters League in 1961, he was engaged in the first massive voter education and registration drive in Southwest Georgia. As a national staff member of the (Dutch) Reformed Church in America; as Moderator of the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches; as President of the National Council of Churches; and as President of the American Committee on Africa, he was deeply involved in a wide-range of Human Rights and anti-colonial campaigns in the US, Southern Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. He was denied visas to South Africa until after Nelson Mandela was released in 1990; in 1979, with the late Dr. William Sloane Coffin, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton and the late Leon-Etienne Cardinal Duval, he ministered to US personnel being held hostage in Iran; and with The Reverend Jesse Jackson, he helped to secure the release of US Navy pilot, Robert O. Goodman from Syria.

Having spent much of the 70's and 80's focusing upon international affairs, in 1992 he turned to more domestic concerns when he assumed the presidency of New York Theological Seminary, a graduate school of theological education devoted to leadership development for church workers in the New York metropolitan region. During his tenure at the Seminary, NYTS implemented joint programs with two area universities in Social Work and Urban Education, and was granted the Award for Excellence by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations.

Dr. Howard was called to pastor Bethany Baptist Church in Newark, NJ in 2000, where for him the challenges facing residents in America's third oldest city have become central. Bethany Cares, Inc., founded shortly after his tenure began in Newark, is a community-development corporation that enhances the church's outreach capacity, and currently serves families and young people from all walks of life, including those who are incarcerated.

Dr. Howard has served on the boards of the National Urban League, The Independent Sector, and The Children's Defense Fund, among others. He chaired Newark Mayor Cory Booker's transition team; and he chaired the NJ Death Penalty Study Commission, which led to the State of NJ becoming the first state to abolish the death penalty since it was reauthorized by the US Supreme Court in 1976. He is a founding member of the Newark Community Foundation and Immediate Past Chair of the Rutgers University Board of Governors.

He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and has received numerous citations, awards, honorary degrees and keys to cities. In February 2011, he was listed as one of NJBIZ's 100 Most Powerful People in New Jersey Business. In February 2008, he received the Bennie Award for Achievement, named for famed Morehouse College president, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, whose autobiography, *Born to Rebel*, Dr. Howard helped to research.

Dr. Howard is an ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches, USA, a graduate of Morehouse and Princeton Theological Seminary, and he and his wife, the former Barbara J. Wright, married in 1970. They are the parents of three adult children.