

**Contact: Zerline Hughes
Jennings**
Press Prep
Phone 617.596.6958
Phone 661.252.0396

Los Angeles TenPoint Coalition
c/o West Angeles CDC
3741 Stocker Street
Los Angeles, CA 90008

**L.A. TenPoint
Coalition**

Press Release

City of Boston Hopes to Spread its Miracle to L. A.:

New Los Angeles TenPoint Coalition Nets \$600,000 from Labor Dept. for its Faith-based Ready4Work Juvenile Re-entry initiative

Organization seeks volunteer mentors; orientation Friday, Nov. 19 & Sat. Nov. 20

Los Angeles, CA, November 15, 2004: In May of 2004, Rev. Mark Jennings, 27, a former journalist for the *Ventura County Star* and *Virginian-Pilot* newspapers graduated from Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, MA with visions of religious grandeur. A few months later in September, the Washington, D.C. native was tapped to head the Los Angeles version of the TenPoint Coalition, a faith-based nonprofit dedicated to reducing youth violence, started in Boston by activist Rev. Eugene F. Rivers, III.

Rev. Rivers and the TenPoint Coalition in Boston are credited with helping to secure a dramatic 62 percent dip in youth crime in that eastern city during the early 1990s. The young and hopeful Rev. Jennings hopes to do the same for Los Angeles. "This is not a Sunday-only authorization, but a 365-day directive that supplants any of our selfish inclinations or intentions," said Jennings.

Working under the auspices of Bishop Charles E. Blake, pastor of mega church West Angeles Church of God in Christ, Jennings intends to challenge black clergy to move the gospel beyond the pulpit and pews to reach his organization's goals.

"As Christians we have a mandate to proclaim liberty to the captives and to open the door of the prison to those who are bound," explained Rev. Jennings. "As members of the black church we have a communal responsibility to our ancestors and heritage to serve and protect our own neighborhoods."

Los Angeles TenPoint Coalition

Mentoring, Monitoring and Ministering to High-Risk Youth

more

There are two avenues of involvement that Jennings hopes to offer the black church community in Los Angeles: Jennings invites pastors, ministers, deacons and laypersons of any denomination to participate as volunteer mentors in the Re-Entry Initiative launching in December in collaboration with the Los Angeles Probation Department and with support from such established institutions as LAUSD's "Beyond the Bell" program and LA Mentor Partnership. This program is funded through the U.S. Department of Labor and administered by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) in Philadelphia.

"Our mentoring program provides churches in such locations as Watts, South Central and Crenshaw with an opportunity to fight the commuter church syndrome," Rev. Jennings said. "Now, instead of having members simply drive in and leave out, our program gives congregants a reason to stay and have a more vested role in the life and vitality of the community surrounding their church."

Additionally, Jennings hopes to convince some clergy members to begin a weekly taskforce on youth violence. He also hopes to establish weekly clergy street patrols to gauge the temperature and needs of certain neighborhoods in South Los Angeles.

"Since arriving in the Los Angeles area, I've heard from a handful of preachers that 'that Boston stuff of clergy going out into the streets at night to pray and talk with youth is insane,'" Jennings said. "All I can say, is that I guess I'm crazy enough to die trying, if it will help at least one young person. And I can only hope that there are more preachers like me."

Volunteers age 21 and up are needed now! Those interested are required to attend a volunteer orientation session located at West Angeles Church of God in Christ in Los Angeles (3045 Crenshaw Blvd.) this week/end. Three opportunities are available for attendees' convenience on Friday, November 19 from 6 to 9pm, or Saturday, November 20 from 10 am to 1pm or 3 to 6 pm.

To volunteer or for more information, email info@latenpoint.org or call the TenPoint office at 323.292.3301.

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Rev. Jennings and his staff are available as sources/authorities on faith-based initiatives and high-risk youth issues. Rev. Jennings is also available for interviews and photos if there is interest in pursuing an article.

Possible story angles may include:

- The start-up and goals of the L.A. TenPoint
- Recent gang violence and how orgs like the TenPoint can help
- Successes/downfalls in this new school year and what efforts and partnerships have already been put in place to combat on- and off-campus youth violence
- Chaplain work in the probation department and how L.A. County chaplains are unpaid for their challenging work; how chaplains are sought, who's interested
- Bishop Charles E. Blake and West Angeles Church of God in Christ Church's efforts to do outreach to the communities beyond their own
- Rev. Mark Jennings' own high-risk past, Harvard experience and journey to Los Angeles
- Is there really a new, fresh, pro-active answer to solving the high risk youth and gang violence problem
- How churches and law enforcement can work together to save the inner-city communities

Resourceful Web sites for your convenience:

- www.latenpoint.org –Los Angeles TenPoint Organization
- www.ppv.org –information about the LA TenPoint funder and the Ready4Work Initiative
- www.bostonstrategy.com –details about the “Boston Miracle” and the key players
- www.ntlf.org –National TenPoint Leadership Foundation, entity responsible for the spread of the TenPoint movement across the United States
- <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2004/06.10/27-jennings.html> --News article about Rev. Mark Jennings in the *Harvard (University) Gazette*.