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“One Simple, One Complex”

In these recession-like times, the Black Church can perform at least two functions that can help membership weather the economic storm more effectively.

First, the church can reduce the cost of food staples considerably.

Using today’s technology, the church can provide a wholesaler’s catalog of products and take orders and payments for a wide range of food and other products across its congregation.

On an economies of scale basis, the church can make bulk orders of these goods from wholesalers.

Church volunteers can receive delivery of these goods and distribute them without any mark-up.

According to 2009 U.S. Census Bureau data on annual retail sales (<http://www.census.gov/retail/index.html#arts>), the retail margin (calculated as sales less purchases and inventories) for grocery stores (North American Industrial Classification System Code 4451) was 21.6%. Therefore, therefore, the congregation could expect to incur about this much in saving. Imagine saving over 20% on your food budget.

Accordingly, members can enter their orders on Sunday, and return on Saturday for pickup. This is a very simple technique that could help church members stretch their dollars.

Second, and a more complex undertaking, the Black Church can provide church-sponsored unemployment insurance.

Many churches already provide burial insurance. They collect premiums and distribute a lump-sum payment when a death occurs.

In the case of unemployment insurance, denominations can design an unemployment insurance package that allows members to pay premiums while they work, and then to receive a lump-sum or periodic payouts when members become unemployed.

No-trade margin food distribution can be performed on a church-by-church basis as long as church membership is large enough; usually, wholesalers have a minimum order amount.

However, the unemployment insurance program should be developed by nationwide denominations so that they will have a broad base against which to spread risk and they can benefit from the fact that the economic cycle (upturns and downturns) can be different for different regions of the nation.

These are two functions that today's Black Church can perform to help congregations economically, particularly during difficult times. By so doing, the Church teaches entrepreneurship and makes itself more relevant and useful to a population that is increasingly looking elsewhere for help.

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