

Neil V. Getnick  
Remarks Upon Presentation of  
Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Southern California Beloved Community Award  
to Pastor William D. Smart, Jr.  
Chateau Marmont – Saturday, June 15, 2024

Earlier I said that I was honored to receive the SCLC of Southern California Beloved Community Award and indeed I was and am. Still, I consider it an even greater honor to have been asked to present this award to Pastor William D. Smart, Jr.

Isaiah, Chapter 58, Verse 12, tells us “Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a rebuilders of walls and a restorer of homes.” Pastor Smart’s focus to rebuild the ruins has been a lifelong mission. Anyone who goes to work with Pastor Smart witnesses firsthand his dedication to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s vision and manifestation of his Dream.

People say, “Be the Dream.” Called into ministry at the age of 9, and today at the helm of both the SCLC of Southern California and Hurting and Hungry, Pastor Smart is the Dream in all that he says and does.

I could go into more detail about Pastor Smart’s impressive biography. But most of you know that already and you will find a profile in the journal for this event. Instead, I would like to share with you my personal observations that cause me to have such deep respect and admiration for him.

He is a man who is an exemplary husband and father who every day displays his commitment to the Commandment to “Honor your father and mother.” So, I take a moment to acknowledge the Smart family, Pastor Thembekila Smart, and the Smart children, KarmaNia, Gregory, and Jehoshua who are a powerful force for good in this world. And, if I may be so indulgent, I would like to acknowledge my own family, my wife Peggy, and my daughters Courtney and Katherine, who honor me with their presence this evening. Because everything starts with family and, with that foundation, we fulfill our vision and carry our out mission.

By now you know that through the starting action of Pastor Smart, the Chateau Marmont and Unite Here 11 went on to achieve a mutually beneficial collective bargaining agreement. And make no mistake about it, that’s a good thing. But Pastor Smart led us to higher ground. For a contract is transactional. Whereas a covenant is transformational. And that is what we celebrate this evening: the covenant embodied by the alliance amongst the SCLC, the Chateau Marmont, and Unite Here 11 to pursue a continuing initiative for social and economic justice.

It is my honor and privilege to present the SCLC of Southern California Beloved Community Award to Pastor Smart, a man of destiny, helping all he touches to fulfill their destinies as well.