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New Bishop Sees Role For Church In 'Spirit' Rather Than In Politics

By Mack Alexander

Members of the African Methodist Episcopal church in Missouri and Kansas have a new bishop—one who would have his fellow members of the cloth spend more time preaching about the power of Spirit than about the power of politics.

Bishop Henry W. Murph, assigned Sunday to the 17 state 5th Episcopal District of the A.M.E. church, said the black clergy has put too much emphasis on electoral politics—an emphasis that he believes is threatening the spiritual foundation of the black community.

"The purpose of the church is to help people

rediscover their roots—ancestral and spiritual—in the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God,"



BISHOP MURPH

Bishop Murph said in an interview this week. "I want to see the black church return to its spiritual mission."

Bishop Murph served the last four years as bishop of the 10th district, which comprises the state of Texas. In the 5th district, he follows the flamboyant and controversial Bishop H. Hartford Brookins, 5th district bishop for the last eight years. Brookins was assigned to the 12th district, which is made up of Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Bishop Brookins is highly active in local and national politics.

He has played a key role in Rev. Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign and with him in San Francisco. The Bishop has also led campaigns for Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley.

Locally, Bishop Brookins has raised campaign funds for Congressman Alan Wheat.

"With me politics is out," the 71-year-old Bishop Murph said. "That is not my style. I am low key, low visibility."

Bishop Murph said he is proud of the role the black church, and the A.M.E. church in particular, has played in the struggle and

advancement of black people. However, he added, campaigning for political offices and operating income-producing projects should be left to those black organizations that have been set up to do those things.

Too many of his fellow members of the cloth, he said are pointing to the increasing number of black elected officials, imposing buildings and sweeping economic development plans as power. While

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