

2020 ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING PASTORS' REPORT

³ *I thank my God every time I remember you.* ⁴ *In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy*
⁵ *because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,* ⁶ *being confident of this, that he*
who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 1:3-6 NIV)

It is my honor to give this second Annual Pastor's Report of my tenure at Bronx Bethany Church of the Nazarene. What a blessing to give oversight to His church and lead His beloved at this unique time in human history.

THANKGIVING & PRAISE

2020 was truly an unprecedented period. Our congregation, along with global community experienced the realities of engaging and navigating a modern-day pandemic. Beyond the mere disruption of normalcy, it completely changed interpersonal engagements, corporate worship, and all facets of life as we have known it. Undoubtedly, there has been great hardship and heartache in this season. Against this background, scripture tells us to, *"Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name."* (Psalm 100:4 NIV) I therefore bless the Lord for his loving kindness and faithfulness to us. I thank the Lord for his evidenced sustaining grace and his palpable presence in this church. Praise the Lord for his divine wisdom and foresight in equipping his church for such as time as this. While the pandemic has not ended, our Bible reminds us that we can shout before battles are over. Moreover, we can stand assured of the Holy Spirit's abiding presence with us!

REMEMBERANCE

In 2020, twenty-nine (29) persons died who were either members of Bronx Bethany or connected by membership here. The Pastoral Staff and I officiated eighteen (18) funerals while either attending, participating and/or supporting eleven (11) families linked to our members. Seven (7) of our longstanding members and stalwarts in the faith have gone on to be with the Lord: Bro. Trevor Taylor, Sis. Linda Godfrey, Bro. Ivan Phillips, Sis. Judith Ann Sadler-Bryan, Bro. Merton St. Hill, Sis. Iona Jordan, and Sis. Doreen Ruty. These pillars in our community must be recognized for their faithfulness to God and their enduring commitment to this church. We thank God for them and honor their legacies of piety, availability, servitude, and sacrifice.

The Pastoral staff and a cadre of extraordinary members have provided support for those in our community who have lost loved ones this year. Families have testified to the great benefit of being a part of the family of God especially in difficult times. As a church, we will continue to mourn with our brothers and sisters. I would like us to have a moment of silence to remember those who have received their crown and in thanksgiving for God's provision of faithful servants.

WORSHIP

Beginning January 5th, we adjusted the corporate worship times to three (3) equidistant worship gatherings on Sundays at 8 am, 11 am, and 2 pm (Spanish). Persons attested to a dynamic and transformative Spirit-led engagement that averaged approximately six hundred and twenty-seven (627) persons in weekly attendance. Thank you to all the individuals and teams who made our worship experience epic and continue to be vital to this ministry. Your labor and commitments have been instrumental in providing a place where persons can receive, *"access to the grace of God."*

Per the rapid developments of Coronavirus, we made the prudent decision to suspend in-person worship and transition to a completely remote experience (*Beginning March 15th*) in an effort to ensure the safety of the congregation. Swiftly, the Worship, Production and Communication teams sprang into action, spending countless hours reorganizing personnel and resources to ensure the community could continue

to worship together in their homes. Two virtual experiences were provided. First, we delivered a 12 pm virtual experience via YouTube (average 2,105 viewers weekly) and Facebook (average 223 viewers per week). Next, we established a 2 pm Spanish Zoom Service which provided an interactive experience which averaged approximately thirty-five (35) households weekly. The Latino congregation's perseverance in worship and commitment to ministry is noteworthy. While this adjustment was novel for us all, I believe we were helped tremendously by God to connect in worship and to onboard new persons whom the Lord was calling.

I believe whole-heartedly that the congregation's participation in *ALL IN* (initiated prior to my arrival at Bronx Bethany), made it possible for us to transition to Video-on-Demand. We were able to reorganize as a team and provide a high-quality remote experience. God was and is up to something. Thanks to the entire Pastoral Staff who have faithfully and consistently preached the whole Gospel. A special thanks to the Production team for their great commitment and sacrifices. Nicholas Burt-Miller, Christopher White, Toshi Hamilton, Shanese Powell, Kyle James, and Brice Gillings have served with consistency and excellence.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Spiritual formation continued to be a priority for us throughout the year. We give thanks to God that the community was able to connect to various growth opportunities virtually. Fresh Start, Bridge, and Spirit-Filled Life classes continued and were accessible to the community. Many thanks to Sis. Shyrill Powell, Sis. Francine Mullings and the entire group of convicted, willing, and proficient teachers who ensured people were guided in their faith journey.

Weekly, women and men (English & Latino) gathered in their respective sessions with their corresponding pastors to foster community, find strength and encouragement, and grow in depth of knowledge and purity of heart. Women had an average of approximately forty-five (45) persons with participation locally, nationally and globally. Men had a relatively high rate of visitation and averaged approximately thirty (30) men in person (prior to lockdown) and twenty (20) men virtually. Our Men, Women, and Latino Pastors began cultivating leadership, intentionally journeying with persons to also share in the work of spiritual development and congregational connectivity.

Much time was spent in our virtual groups focusing on the church's theme for the year *Declutter, Discover and Develop*. We continued with a study in the book of Acts, as well as Advent Reflections. I was excited about our church-wide Spiritual Gifts Study because of my desire to discern our church's missional, "*collective potential*." Approximately eighteen percent (18%) of our membership participated in the Spiritual Gifts Survey. Of the persons who participated, the results showed that our community is high in the areas of Shepherding, Mercy-Showing, Serving and Administration. Many thanks to all of our Small Group Leaders who facilitated with consistency, care and distinction.

We maintained that, "*Prayer is the Work!*" Prayer opportunities were vast and accessible in both English and Spanish. Latino Ministry's Sis. Yvonne Lewis organized us in a daily three (3) hour rotation, while Sis. Sharon Davis ensured that at least once a month we would be in intensified fasting and prayer as a community. With an array of ways to participate, persons were able to pray and fast together and create new connections.

Whether through direct calling, a virtual pizza party, a dedicated Children's section on the website, participation in the Christmas Children's Program, prayer and virtual quizzing, there was a concerted attempt to address the needs of Children. Special thanks to entire Children's Ministry team, Sis. Arlene, Sis. Veronica Maxwell, Sis. Sharon Davis and a host of others who engaged children continuing the work of providing strong biblical foundations.

MISSIONAL

Many thanks to Sis. Loisen Jacobs and the Missional team for their availability to the Lord. I continue to be encouraged by our church's desire to be bearers of God's presence. Throughout this season, our community has ministered to shelters, distributed care packages, assisted in visitation to hospitals, sick and shut-ins, and much more. I must highlight the work of our Executive Director of BBCC Mrs. Melanie Blackwood and our amazing team who throughout this trying year, ensured that distributing food to our community was a high priority. Despite the brutal weather conditions, our team of committed volunteers served God's people with excellence and with dignity. Approximately eighty (80) persons served at the Pantry. Words cannot express the joy in my heart when I survey the wondrous love of our God displayed through our congregation.

While we participated in the global missionary agenda via our denominational commitments, we have additionally partnered with persons and ministries in the Caribbean, South America and Africa. I am glad to report that in total, we gave over \$217,000 towards missional engagement locally, nationally, and globally. Praise the Lord!

Here are some additional highlights...

- Video-on-demand weekly served as a key component of outreach and connectivity
- Walked closely with many families who experienced loss of a loved one
- Pantry Volunteerism increased to eighty (80) persons
- Doubled food distribution serving 5,000 of neighbors weekly through the Food Pantry
- Supported families giving approx. 29k through Local Benevolence
- 135 new givers gave over 56k & percentage of Online giving went from 27% to 73%.
- Maintained 100% of our staff without layoffs
- PPP Loan forgiven (*Special Thanks to Coleen Mendes, Everith Palmer, & Curtis Dale*)
- Purchased 4041 Paulding Ave
- Made positive connection points for children
- Became a Covid Testing Site for the first week in September
- Led in racial discussions and a Prayer Protest against systemic injustice
- Engaged in the local electoral process by providing access to political information
- Received sixteen (16) New Members
- Baptized three (3) persons
- Dedicated fifteen (15) babies to the Lord
- Determined Rev. Dr. V. Seymour Cole Scholarship Award at Eastern Nazarene College
- Determined Rev. Dr. Samuel Vassel Scholarship Award at Nazarene Theological Seminary
- Began *Levitical Formation* to facilitate spiritual growth of those vital to the worship expression
- Began the process of the interior facility redesign
- Counseled, married, and supported families through Life Services

**For more details, see Missions Report & Bronx Bethany Community Corporation Report*

A LOOK AHEAD TO 2021

It is my intent to reopen the church facility beginning Sunday May 2, 2021. While the pandemic has not yet ended, I believe that with our greater understanding of the Coronavirus, increased testing, a reduction in the curve, improved knowledge of best safety practices and protocols, and vaccine availability, we can begin a process of facility reentry. We will employ a phased approach in keeping with CDC, NY State, and New York City guidelines. It is important to note that although we will reenter the church facility, things will not be the same. I encourage persons to adjust expectations and trust that despite differences and/or newness, God is working! Special thanks Executive Director David Vassel, Dr. Noel Brown,

Shubert Jacobs, David Mendes, Abigail Dawson, Racquel Smith-Anderson, David Blackwood, and Nicole Dyer for serving on this committee and leading us in this effort. *See the Facility Reopening Committee Report for more information*

Although derailed in part by the pandemic, I continue to maintain the five (5) points of emphasis outlined in 2020 that are of critical importance for us at this time.

1. Facility Interior Upgrade (*emphasis on children & youth*) & Development Planning.
2. Development of Human Resources (People & Policies)
3. Leadership Development
4. Missional Reorganization & Clarity
5. Fund Development Strategy

We continue to be challenged in ministry to and through students. We have added a Student Coordinator, Marie “Woods” Altidor to the team to help manage K-12 programming. Continue to pray with me as we seek to develop this vital area of ministry further. Also pray with me as we seek cross-cultural unity. I am trusting the Lord to continue to lead us in this regard to bridge gaps and create a picturesque expression of God’s manifest presence in our midst.

RECOGNITION

The staff of Bronx Bethany have preached, taught, counseled, served, cleaned, administrated, prayed, rebuked, and comforted. Throughout this year they have shouldered much and I give thanks for their partnership and friendship. Special thanks to Rev. Carlene “Joy” Reynolds, Rev. Althea Taylor, Rev. Andy Rubin, Rev. Martha Fajardo, Rev. Lilly Porter-Bennett, Rev. Haughton Brown, David Vassel, Coleen Mendes, Pansy Thomas, Arlene Nembhard, Melanie Snape, Everith Palmer, David Blackwood and Rick Ferguson. Thank God for them and the call of God on their lives. Our own Rev. Althea Taylor left the staff to join the Metro New York District to lead in Compassion, Justice and Immigration. Thank you, for your extraordinary ministry marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit, love, compassion, excellence, and true friendship. May God grant you the desires of your heart.

I thank God for the church board that has led us in faithfulness. Their prayers, encouragement, commitment, leadership and counsel have proved invaluable to me. They have served the Lord and His church well. May God bless you and provide for your households in abundance!

I am deeply grateful for my wife Yanique who has played a vital role in ministry. While her preference is the background, she too has served faithfully by encouraging, loving, counseling, and ensuring that I stay the course. She continues to be the engine of our family and is committed to facilitating atmospheres of hard work, rest, vision, expectation, interdependence, and celebration. I love you! Thank you to my wonderful children Seth and Hannah, who too have served. They have understandingly shared me, refreshed me, and continue to inspire me. I will never forget their encouragements as I would leave for the day, “Love you Daddy...we prayed for you...now go preach preacher!”

I believe that the best is yet to come as we remain steadfast in the promises of God. I thank God for the opportunity he has given us to participate in his redemptive plan. Scripture reminds us that, ¹⁰ *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,*¹¹ *according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:10-11 NIV)*

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Richard Griffiths, **Lead Pastor**

Children Ministry Concept Beginnings

