

**ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING**  
**Saturday March 19, 2022**

**PASTOR'S REPORT**

It is my honor to give my third Annual Pastor's Report in my tenure at Bronx Bethany Church of the Nazarene. What a privilege it is to serve and lead this beloved community at this critical time in the world.

**THANKGIVING & PRAISE**

I give thanks to the Lord for his faithfulness in 2021. The Psalmist directs us to prioritize thanksgiving and praise (Psalms 100:4) ...*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. (Psalms 118:1 [NIV]) I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together. (Psalms 34:1-3 [NIV])*

As the COVID-19 crisis continued, we experienced a myriad of personal and congregational challenges. We were compelled to embrace new normalcies in almost every aspect of life while adjusting real-time to the conditions that were before us. I thank God for this congregation who persevered with grace, class, and joy; for this faith community that displayed compassion, responsiveness, and the ability to remain flexible and nimble. The presence of the Lord through it all was evident as new people committed their lives to Christ while others experienced a deepening in their faith journey. I thank the Lord for his sustaining grace, and I am in awe of his redemptive guarantee as he used the time to begin to reshape and reframe our ministry for years to come. This season was undoubtedly difficult; however, it was exciting to be in the midst of God's shifting of his church.

**REMEMBERANCE**

In 2021, our community suffered greatly again with death and loss of loved ones. The Pastoral Staff formally officiated six (6) funerals, while participating in many more. I must mention two of our longstanding members who transitioned, our cherished and oldest member Sis. Desde Farquharson, and pillar in our community, Sis. Violet Hinds. We thank God for their commitments, their sacrifices to the Lord and their service of his church. The people who we have supported through these difficult times have testified to the grace of God and the benefit of being in Christian community. Our leaders and members went to great lengths to express the love of God and be present for persons who were grieving. We continue to stand with our members, their families, and community members who continue to mourn. I would like us to have a moment of silence now to remember those who have gone on to receive their crown. Amen.

**WORSHIP**

As the suspension of weekly in-person worship services continued per the COVID-19 crisis, video-on-demand and zoom continued to be our corporate experience until April 25, 2021. On May 2, 2021, we resumed in-person worship services in keeping with CDC, New York State, New York City, as well as our own safety protocols. I believe the Lord has honored our diligence in seeking to love our neighbors as ourselves and protecting our most vulnerable. Despite the social distance and lack of interpersonal engagement, it was still a joy for people to return to worship physically. Whether in-person or virtually,

those who participated attested to a rich, dynamic, Spirit-filled, and transformative experience in some way.

The offering to our children each Sunday was attractive, engaging, and effective. While some children returned to Children's Church on September 26<sup>th</sup>, our virtual offerings continued. Feedback from both children and parents have been positive and encouraging. Special thanks to our Children's Ministry Director, Sis. Roodlyne (Woods) Altidor and the efficient and committed team. As usual the children's Christmas presentation was outstanding. Thanks to our parents, Sis. Arlene Nembhard and her team.

*Here are some additional highlights...*

Online worship served as a key component of outreach and connectivity. In-person adult worship averaged 106 people (not including volunteers). There were 519 total unique people in adult worship and 32 unique children in Children's Church. There was a total of 80,893 total views online and 1434 total YouTube shares. Our viewership extended nationally from New York to Texas, Georgia, Illinois, Florida, Massachusetts, and internationally to Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua. It is also noteworthy that we had 86 unique people who volunteered with an average of 35 volunteers per week.

*More online engagement stats...*

- Avg age groups 18-24 (2%), 25-34 (6.3%), 35-44 (10%), 45-54 (18%), 55-64 (24%), 65+ (40%)
- Duration...25-34 (14 min), 35-44 (6 min), 45-54 (25 min), 55-64 (27 min), 65+ (22 min)
- Female (69%), Male (31%)
- 8,000+ unique users

Thank you to every person who made our worship experiences both possible and dynamic. Your labor and commitments have been instrumental in granting people "access to the grace of God." The entire Pastoral Staff faithfully and consistently preached the whole Gospel. Our Praise and Worship team members dedicated countless hours to prayer, preparation, and execution, leading us each Sunday. The Chapel Choir, Chosen, and the Children's choir prioritized worship and committed themselves to exuberant praise despite the many limitations. The Production and Communication teams were stellar in identifying, recruiting, developing, and envisioning new ways forward to connect the community and provide an avenue for congregational onboarding. To navigate the realities of the pandemic, field personal challenges while tending to the varying work commitments was no easy feat and I am truly grateful. Special thanks to Odane Whilby, Arlene Nembhard, Nichelle Maynard-Elliott, Devon Bennett, David Mendes, Nicholas Burt-Miller, Christopher White, and Cemoy Clarke who have led Worship, Music, and Production teams. To Junior Bowen, Kyle James, Nadjé Leslie, Jusani Morris, Rhiannon Rerrie, Jude Arthur, Daniel Joseph Genise Reid Musicians Ricky Joseph, Jermaine Collins, Manny Rosillo, Aaron Brockett, and David Moxy, you have served the Lord and his church with consistency and excellence. Special thanks to the men who comprise both the safety and parking teams. Your commitments must never go unnoticed as you ensured week after week, that persons could engage the Lord without fewer impediments.

## **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 new believers and persons desiring to become

members. Many thanks to Sis. Shyrrill Powell, Sis. Francine Mullings and the entire group of willing and proficient teachers who ensured people were guided in their faith journey.

Men and women (both English speaking and Spanish speaking) gathered virtually each week in their respective sessions with their corresponding pastors to foster community, to find encouragement, and to mature in Christ. The pastoral approach was one of disciple-making leadership development as well as facilitating Christian praxis for persons in the wider community. During the Lenten season, time was spent in “*Sacred Invitation Lenten Devotions*” drawn from the Book of Common Prayer. From May to June, men and women participated in “*Lessons from the Psalms*” by Max Lucado. Spanish-speakers additionally met regularly on weekly studying Spiritual Freedom as a means to effectively lead lives that exhibit the produce of the Spirit. From July to September, men and women joined together for personal and spiritual development participating in the Summer Speaker Series. Special thanks Dr. Gordon Edwards who led us in “*Emotional Resilience: Healing from a Season of Trauma*,” Dr. T.D. Wells who presented, “*Building Strong Families*,” and Dr. Michael Mata who led us in “*Exegeting our Community*,” which culminated in our community exegesis walk and analysis.

Our Leadership Symposium was held On Saturday, October 30<sup>th</sup> with Dr. Ron Benefiel as the guest lecturer. His Topic was, *Toward a Missional Church*. Though there were several salient points, we were reminded that, “the missional church participates in God’s mission...and we participate in the Triune life of God in ways that bear witness to the holy character of God.”

Some highlights...

- Women increased in average attendance from 45 to 52 women with studies on the Psalms having the largest participation with up to 70 women in attendance.
- Men have had up to 20 persons in their online engagement. Spanish speaking men had an additional offering the latter part of the week.
- National and International engagement (Canada, Jamaica, Florida, and Chicago)
- Generosity was displayed as groups of men women supported one-another in various ways.
- Pastor report that servitude, interpersonal connectivity, and intergenerational intentionality also increased.

While we are grateful to God for what he has done among us during 2021, we desire to onboard more men and have a more inclusive, diverse, and intergenerational community of women and men.

A special thanks to fourteen women who gave of their time on Monday’s and Tuesdays to ensure that Women’s Gathering was made possible in 2021: Sisters: Donna Marie Williams, Veronica Burt-Miller, Francine Palmer Mullings, Coleen Mendes, Maureen Griffiths, Loisen Harris-Jacobs, Stephnie Hoilet, Yvette Phillips, Janette St. Hill, Nadia Getfield, Shirley Smith, Treacher Ottey, Cheryl Baker, Cheryl Tugman. Special thanks to men who also gave of themselves to ensure of ministry to men, Brothers: Curtis Dale, Owen Dyer, Dave Sharpe, David Mendes, Stelton Syblis, Brian Charles, Stephan Martin and Devon Bennett.

I am grateful for our Men, Women, and Latino Pastors (Rev. Andy Rubin, Rev. Lilly Porter-Bennett, Rev. Martha Fajardo and Rev. Haughton Brown) for cultivating leadership, intentionally journeying with persons, and sharing in the work of spiritual development and congregational connectivity. Even more so, being present for celebration, counsel and support at critical times in the lives of people.

## STUDENTS

Teachers attempted to stay in contact with the children. As the adults studied *Grace*, over one hundred boxes with resource materials on the same topic were packed and sent home for the children. The children and their parents were grateful and excited that they could remain connected while virtual. Much thought was given to creativity for presentations. Thanks to the parents, Sis. Donnamarie Williams and Asanya Hanson for preparing the children. Quizzing continued with 15 children meeting on Sunday mornings attracting an international participant joining from Jamaica. Our quizzers performed with excellence at virtual district wide events. Many were All Stars. Thanks to Sister Sharon Davis, along with the dedicated team and the parents who help our children study God's Word, perform confidently, and have exceptional results. 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

Several of our youth transitioned to college and vocational education. While we were able to provide a time of gathering to send off our students in the summer, our ministry to youth and young adults continues to be a challenge for us. The impact of one-to-one engagements with youth and young adult should never be discounted. In fact, that is the best way to connect with our students. However, we did not enlist a Student Ministry Pastor, nor have we created the system to ensure personal engagement. Pray with me as we make this a priority for personnel in 2022.

## PRAYER

Prayer continued to be a priority. Prayer opportunities were many and accessible in both English and Spanish. Latino Ministry's Sis. Yvonne Lewis organized Spanish speakers and Sis. Sharon Davis ensured that at least once a month we would be unified at every cross-section of the church in intensified fasting and prayer. Thanks also to Sis. Francine Mullings and Jaden Hylton who provided technological support to make our gathering possible. It is worth mentioning that Jaden provided IT support from college sometimes offering over six hours of his time. We are truly grateful.

## CARE GROUPS

Four care groups officially continued virtually throughout the year. Participants engaged in *Sacred Invitation* as an anchoring text. In the Fall, participants explored the book, *Way, Truth, Life – Discipleship as a Journey of Grace* by Dr. David Busic. It was well-received, enlightening, and allowed for a deeper understanding of God's amazing grace. Adult Sunday School also provided a sense of care with a weekly virtual attendance of 30 people. Special thanks to the Care Group Leaders Sis. Heather Morris, Bro. Lenroy Stevens, Bro. Paulo Tenant, Sis. Lana Hoshing

## SICK-AND-SHUT-IN

Phone calls were made to ensure that those who are sick, and shut-in still feel connected and cared for. Few persons were visited organizationally however, both men and women ministry members attempted to provide support for those experiencing isolation. For some, weekly deliveries were made from the resources of pantry. While men and women ministry members have visited those in need, we are still challenged with having an organized system for consistent care.

## 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 also highlight the work of our Executive Director of BBCC Mrs. Melanie Blackwood, the BBCC Board and our amazing team who throughout the year, ensured that serving our community was the highest priority.

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.

*Here are some additional highlights...*

- Participated in Community exegesis walk
- Became member of the Bronx-wide People's Platform and partners of established relationships with the Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative (BCDI)
- Completed the process of the interior facility redesign plan
- Pastoral staff counseled, married, and supported families with direct counseling and/or referrals

*\*For more details, see Missions Report*

## LOOKING AHEAD

In 2021 the following priorities were outlined:

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

By the grace of God, we were able to initiate transitions in almost all these areas.

The 2022 theme is "Moving Where He's Leading: Pillar of Cloud by Day, Pillar of Fire by Night." I believe that in every area of ministry and leadership it is critical for us to reorganize as a church. While our message is the same, the times have indeed changed. Our methodologies must be critiqued and reshaped for this leg of the race. At the board level, we will reorganize committees, responsibilities, processes, and procedures to remain faithful and effective. At the staff level we will reorganize and enlist support in areas of greatest needs both structurally and ministerially.

Rev. Carlene "Joy" Reynolds will assume the role of Marriage and Family Pastor, providing oversight, support, and direction to this area. Rev. Amalia Henao will be officially designated and assigned as Bronx Bethany's missionary to Colombia, providing strategic synergies and leading all initiatives. We have enlisted Cliff and Jocelyn Turner as Communications Directors. We will be onboarding Rev. Andrew Bennet as Pastor for Ministerial Formation with direct responsibility for ministers in process. Rev. Bennett will provide support for persons with a call to pastoral, evangelistic, or diaconate ministry and the process of ordination as liaison to the Metro New York District.

We will also be intentional in moving from a segmented ethnic experience toward one that is integrative and ethno-relative. Latino leaders should only be considered leaders for Latin-X people but should be considered leaders of the church. It is not an easy thing to experience unity in our diversity, but it is something that biblical and worth toiling toward that end.

The 7 Priorities for 2022 are...

1. Student Ministry Development including onboarding of Student Ministries Pastor(s)
2. Gaining Missional Clarity and Reorganizing leadership
3. Continuing Leadership Development (laity)
4. Small Group Restructuring and relaunching
5. Fund & Facilities Development Strategies
6. Strategic community partnerships
7. Prayer

Beyond episodic ministry, my desire it to build for full, consistent, and meaningful engagements that allows for longevity and innovation with the ability to pivot when God directs us to move. These priorities are matters of prayer and understanding. They are necessary pieces for where the Lord is leading us.

## **RECOGNITION**

The staff of Bronx Bethany have preached, taught, counseled, served, cleaned, administrated, prayed, admonished, 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. Andy Rubin, Rev. Martha Fajardo, Rev. Lilly Porter-Bennett, Rev. Haughton Brown, David Vassel, Coleen Mendes, Pansy Thomas, Arlene Nembhard, Melanie Snape, Everith Palmer, Cliff Turner, Jocelyn Turner, David Blackwood and Rick Ferguson.

I thank God for the church board that has led us faithfully. 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. 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. 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 thank the Lord for the opportunity to serve you. Indeed, we are, “Better Together.”

*May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 [NIV])*

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Dr. Richard Griffiths