

WORSHIPING OUTSIDE THE BOX – THE GLORY TEAM! INAUGURAL MEETING

BIG BETHEL STRONG... EMBRACING ALL GENERATIONS

Big Bethel AME Church

Reverend John Foster, Ph.D., Senior Pastor

Committee Chairs: Dr. Janie Franis-Asante, Morgan Johnson, Maria White Tillman

Date: June 4, 2016

Location: Robert Mason Conference Room, Big Bethel AME Church, Atlanta Georgia

[Matthew 18:20](#) *"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."*

During our inaugural committee meeting, the committee chairs shared the church retreat ***Worshiping Outside the Box*** report that was submitted to Dr. Jackie Michael and Brother Guy Howard. Dr. Jackie and Brother Howard are the overall organizers over all three committee teams. Each committee, which came out of our last month church wide retreat - are tasked to share with Pastor Foster feasible and tangible suggestions to enhance Big Bethel and grow our church. The suggestions are to come from you... our congregation.

WORSHIPING OUTSIDE THE BOX MEETING NOTES

Currently Pastor has to literally scream at the top of his lungs to formally begin the worship service. Many churchgoers finish up their last bit of conversation and it takes several seconds for the entire church to literally pay attention. Suggestions to assist Pastor include:

- 5-10 minutes before the start of both services have a Praise Team stand in front of the altar and get the congregation spiritually ready by singing a few spirit filled songs. The Posse or a pianist/organist would accompany the Praise Team.
- At the appointed start of service, the choir and pulpit still march in together, but would and join in singing the song with the praise team and congregation.
- At the end of the song, Pastor says his traditional: "Let the church say amen..." etc. Then we continue on with the service as outlined in the bulletin.
- Recurring suggestion was that we have the words to the choirs' songs be made available on the big screen.

We are appreciative to the shortened service, and longer when The Lord leads us. We understand and respect Pastor for it. But we miss alter call. Realizing that everyone cannot be pleased, suggestions include:

- Return Alter Call to the 2nd and 4th Sunday services.
- However, some committee members say they often would go to the alter between service or during the Invitation to Christian Discipleship.

The Amphitheatre needs consistent TLC. And not the occasional clean up, then weeks later having to start cleanup all over again. The committee suggests that if we ever get to a consistent place to keep the Amphitheatre clean:

- Hold service outside, weather permitting.
- Hold the New Beginnings service outside, weather permitting.

We are appreciative of Pastor keeping our Welcome Visitors briefly to “hugging three people nearest you”. A few additional suggestions:

- Welcome visitors closer to the end of service but before the sermon.
- The Philippians announce the visitors name and the visitor remains standing until all names are said. Pastor then invites the visitors to a reception in their honor held in the breezeway outside of Pastor’s office – the pace that connects the offices to the Sanctuary.
- Another suggestion is to have the reception in the Fellowship Hall. Either location, Pastor, representatives from the ministerial staff, our various Lay ministries and the church leadership team representatives are asked to be present and greet our guests.
- Suggestions are that we serve coffee, juice, pastries. Keep it simple but thoughtful.

We all recognized that retaining new members is a big challenge. How do we keep our new members? How do we get them to new members’ class? How do we get them off the pews and involved in church ministries?

- We are suggesting that the Class Leaders’ need to take a more active role. Communicate with the new member. Talk to the new member about the wonderful ministries at Bethel.
- More Class Leaders should volunteer to go to the side office with the new member and introduce and collect information.
- Class Leaders might be the key in retaining the members. They are a key connection to the church.

Bible Study was a surprise addition to our conversation. A few suggestions to enhance Bible Study and increase fellowship include:

- Pastor either physically attend and teach a class or SKYPE in and lead the class. Many members reminisced when a former Pastor would lead the New Members class and it made them feel valued because the Pastor took time out of his day to teach new members.
- The church should consider conducting a survey to the congregation about Bible Study. Find out what does the congregation want to see differently in Bible Study.
- Have a variety of ministers conduct Bible Study. We have a large ministerial staff. Pull on their talents to bring their plethora of knowledge and experiences to Bible Study.

In summary, want to enhance fellowship in all capacities including:

- Add Praise and Worship 5-10 minutes before service begins
- Return alter call to the 2nd and 4th Sunday
- Welcome visitors at the end of service and invite them to our coffee chat
- New members need more attention and TLC from their Class Leader
- Survey the congregation about their thoughts and expectations with Bible Study

Blessings and Respectively Submitted by Committee Chairs:

Dr. Janie Franis-Asante, Morgan Johnson, Maria White Tillman