

Dear Fellow Members, Friends and Supporters:

Isaiah 40:31

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Jesus is our hope. When we hope and have faith in Him, He renews our strength.

The purpose of this report is to update you on the Bethel Presbyterian Church(BPC) of Plainfield New Jersey **Build Bethel Back Better** plans going forward after the pandemic. In March of 2020 covid-19 disrupted the world and the whole country was shutdown. Since then BPC leadership has worked tirelessly to keep the church, its members and friends engaged through 18 months, more than 70 online worship services, bible study hours, leadership meetings, building repairs and a few last rites services.

The pandemic brought on challenges that no Church could have foreseen two years ago and some Churches did not survive to this point. When things seemed bleak for Bethel, **Forward Ever Backward** never motto was restored from history and became the theme for the 137th Church anniversary. It was presented in spoken word by sister Judith Horne-Johnson during the online service with rousing applause.

The Session/ Leadership team met the challenges and more head on in a step by step approach throughout this process. In the days, weeks and months after the anniversary, **Forward Ever Backward Never** became the inspiration for the Leadership team. We were determined to keep on fighting to never give up the quest to revive BPC for today's members and the online followers but to also look forward toward new generations.

The cloud of the pandemic continues to linger over the country and yet the church must get ready to go forward and the time is now. The pandemic was never anticipated to last this long and it has forced leadership to look with in and think outside of the box. The next step in preparation is to safely reopen the Church building, sometimes within the next three to six months with a close eye on the changing dynamics of the pandemic. Moreover, the Leadership team/ Session after much discussion recognized the need for professional theological leadership and consulting assistance going forward at this point.

Rev. Gloria Lyde Smith was approached and accepted the Session offer to work with BPC using her skills, experiences and ministry expertise to help with this enormous task to rebuild and restore BPC for the future. Rev. Smith will report directly to the Session in her capacity as an adviser, spiritual leader, minister, consultant, counselor, planner, etcetera.

THE GOAL:

Help **rebuild and restore** BPC as a community based, purpose driven faith based Christian Church that welcomes all people from all walks of life in the online and in house church ministry. Remembering the BPC heritage by fulfilling the purposes of **worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and mission**, that they are derived from the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

This is an aggressive goal and vision to help BPC **Build Back Better** and Rev. Gloria Lyde Smith has the background, credentials, skills, energy, leadership and commitment to help make it happen.

Four specific areas of focus in consultation with the Session brings this partnership together. 1) Provide consistent theological ministry through sermons during the worship services as well as pastoral care as needed. 2) Provide leadership to help restore and rebuild the music ministry. 3) Evangelism, help initiate and establish new programs centered on the needs of seniors, the youth and young adult community. 4) Any issues that need to be addressed to accomplish the goal. The work ahead will be fluid, dynamic and not limited to what is seen but things and events unseen.

Rev. Smith reminded the Leadership team in meetings to be aware that this project requires an all hands on deck approach consisting of staff, volunteers, members and supporters. No one person can do it alone and it won't happen overnight. It is a steep climb, a step by step approach-process and once again together we can rebuild/restore BPC to be the shining Christian light in the Plainfield community and beyond. How long you say, however long it takes so let's get started and **meet the Rev. Gloria Lyde Smith**



Reverend Gloria Lyde Smith is multi-tasking, a leader, organizer, seasoned preacher, teacher, and gifted contralto singer who proclaims the word of God in her daily life. It is her hope that she can provide insight to people to be able to see Jesus and encourage them to do his will.

Rev. Smith was born to The Rev. Nelson and Mrs. Marion Lyde in Brunswick, Georgia. She spent her early years in Georgia with her earliest Christian experience at Jordon Grove Baptist Church and the First African Baptist Church in Baxley, Georgia. Early on she resisted the call to ministry in part because her father was a pastor and she had been at many revivals and did not see this as her path through life. However, the calling was too great and in.....she accepted the calling and entered the ministry.

Rev. Smith began her studies at Morris Brown College as a Music Education major. Morris Brown College is a private Methodist historically black liberal arts college in Atlanta, Georgia. Founded January 5, 1881, Morris Brown is the first educational institution in Georgia to be owned and operated entirely by African Americans.

In addition to earning a bachelor's degree in Music Education from MBC, she also earned a bachelor's degree in Religious Education from the Eastern Theological Consortium in Yonkers, New York. She earned post-graduate credits from Princeton Theological Seminary and Evergreen College in Tacoma, Washington.

Rev. Smith served as Associate Pastor at St. John's Baptist Church in Scotch Plains, New Jersey and has pastored a church in Georgia as well as founding pastor of Holy Trinity Christian Church. This online community of worshippers in New Jersey recently celebrated their three-year anniversary recently.

Music is a big part of her ministry. She is a composer, pianist and teacher of music. She has sung with many musical groups in New York, New Jersey, Georgia and North Carolina lifting up the name of Jesus in song and prayer. Her favorite hymns are many and she is known to sing one at any time to fit the occasion.

Rev. Smith is married to Isiarh Smith. She is the proud mother of 7 children and the proud grandmother of 9 beautiful grandchildren. Her motto is "touch somebody's life as you pass them. You may never pass that close again."

Finally, the leadership is excited to have Rev. Smith accept the challenge to help move forward and see what God has in store for BPC today and future generations.

Bethel welcomes each and every one of you to join, reconnect or visit and be part of the journey. Build Back Better to continue the legacy leaving this generation's footprint on the 137-year history of BPC for generations to come. BPC remains cautious due to the pandemic but you can check out the new Bethel by connecting to the Sunday Worship service live on Zoom from 10am to 11:30am eastern time.