



Theme: "A Fresh Abundance: Bearing Fruit Together" Gal. 5:22-25





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CHURCHIN'

"The LEADER'S EDGE" by drmichaelbell

Truth is, most African Americans no longer attend church. I said as much in last month's column. I referenced a November 2022 *Christianity Today* article that disclosed that church attendance in African American churches has dropped significantly more than churches of other racial/ethnic groups.

In a March 2019 online write-up titled "We've Come This Far by Faith: The Role of the Black Church in Public Health," co-authors LaPrincess C. Brewer and David R. Williams, assert that "The Black Church is the longstanding institutional backbone of the African American community... It has been a locus of hope, spiritual guidance and social support for African Americans." Yet, the church is underappreciated. So where does the church go from here?

I believe that we need to give Connexus Church pastor Carey Nieuwhof's argument that "engagement is the new attendance," a fair hearing. Nieuwhof posits that "In the future church, attendance won't drive engagement; engagement will drive attendance. If you want your church to grow, stop trying to attract people. Start trying to engage people."

What is church engagement anyway, and why is it important? Church engagement is the connection, commitment, and belonging that individuals experience in relation to your community and mission. Whether it happens through joining a small group, watching your live stream, giving to the church or through any other activity, engagement is what forms important emotional attachments between people and their church.

It's true that an engaged church community will naturally grow, but engagement goes beyond merely quantifying in-person attendance. In fact, almost two-thirds of all Christians are asking for their churches to provide more online discipleship resources (e.g., podcasts, devotionals, and Bible reading plans) to help them grow in their relationship with God in Jesus Christ.

Now, this is a new metric and I believe it's a more accurate index of ministry effectiveness than attendance. For years, the focus has



been on "How many folks showed up for worship today?" But the pandemic revealed that the church was populated by a lot of Jesus fans and very few Jesus followers. And now we're back to Jesus' mandate "Follow me!" Which is another way of saying "Get engaged, get involved!"

How do we transition from pushing church attendance to promoting ministry engagement? I'll give at least one answer in this issue and follow up next month.

For one thing we have to create a culture where engagement is expected! People eventually conform to expectations. Tell a child he'll never amount to a *hill of beans*, and he'll likely give up on the dream of college. Tell a child she can persevere and accomplish the tasks ahead of her, and she likely will. People both rise and descend to our level of expectations. The same is true of congregations.

When you don't expect people to do more than attend your church, don't be surprised if that's all they do. Craft a church culture through your words, calls to action on a Sunday, and in all your communications where you expect people to serve, join a group, bring a friend, and give generously. The stronger your culture, the more your church will grow.

drmichaelbell is Senior Pastor-Resident Theologian of Greater St. Stephen First Church FtW, a seminary adjunct professor and a certified Life Coach. He conducts leadership seminars and conferences across the country. He is the author of "Finding God in Hard Places." He also contributed to the anthology "Justice Looks Like." anthology "Justice Looks Like."



The Greenway Church Virtual Services & Worship

Faith and worship don't happen in one room, they happen wherever you are. The Greenway Church offers virtual church services to customers in Fort Worth and beyond. We celebrate our shared faith and fellowship even when we can't physically come together, to nurture shared community and spiritual needs. Http:thegreenwaychurch.mymobisite.us

Speak Life Thought with First Lady & Co-Pastor Yolanda G. Butler "A Life With Jesus" human being on this earth has an

When Jesus began his earthly ministry. He carefully selected twelve men whom he would groom to become carriers of the Great Gospel of Jesus Christ. One of his famous summons was directed to Peter and Andrew when he said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt 4:19). These twelve men (9 fishermen, a tax collector, a politician, and a thief) would be allowed to work alongside Jesus for three years. During this course of time, they would be taught many facets of ministry: evangelism (John 10:1-17), prayer (Matthew 6:5-13), fasting (Matthew 6:14-18), forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35), stewardship (Luke 6:38-45), love and friendship (John 15:12-15), healing and deliverance (Matthew 10:1), and so much more and even many acts not recorded in the Bible. They would experience firsthand life with Jesus like none other. The life they had with Jesus would be so impactful that they were empowered to evangelize the world, share the love of Jesus, and make other disciples.

It is through these twelve men sharing the Gospel that we are allowed today to experience a life with Jesus for ourselves. Through the shed blood on the cross, every living, breathing human being on this earth has an opportunity to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Life with Jesus is sweeter and sweeter as the days go by. In a world that Jesus forewarned would not get better but worse, it is vital that we as believers not only live a life well pleasing unto Him but also share His love whenever possible. That is why it is so important to be filled with the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. I urge you to pray to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to give you an anointing to persuade the generations of today to turn their heart to the Risen Savior. Share with them how life with Jesus is a better way than a life of "sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these' (Gal. 5:19-21 NLT).

Share with others how life with Jesus has filled you with good fruit of "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. There is no law that can say these things are wrong" (Gal. 5:22-23). Share with them your own life experience with Jesus, how he saved you, how he changed your life, and how you no longer have the appetite to do the sinful things you used to. Tell them



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how life with Jesus has shown you how to be a better person, and how to love yourself and others, even your enemies. Tell them how life with Jesus has developed in you a desire to pray, praise, and worship. Tell them how life with Jesus brought you into a vast spiritual family where you have a chance to grow and learn and help and serve. You are the best candidate to tell your story about how life with Jesus is.

So dear hearts, be determined to live an uncompromising life with Jesus that will provoke others to desire to do the same.

Dr. Yolanda G. Butler is Co-Pastor and Church Administrator of Praise Center Community Church, where her husband Bishop Donald H. Butler is the Senior Pastor. She is an intercessor, evangelist, mentor, and published author. Follow her on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and www.firstladybutlerministries.net.



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The Fort Worth Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce celebrate Black History month with their Inaugural Gospel Mass Community Choir concert



Black gospel music has been a mainstay in history for the African-American community for centuries and always deserves any recognition it receives. The Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce did an awesome job giving tribute to this rich history with it's Inaugural Gospel Mass Community Choir presentation held at the I.M. Terrell Academy for STEM and VPA Auditorium. The theme was "Back to Our Roots in Song".

What a glorious affair it was, featuring an over 50 voice mass choir, conducted by Marion Douglas. The song selections were a mixture of old gospel favorites and modern choir arrangements that left us all in awe of God's goodness, grace and mercy.

Upspire welcomes Daryl R. Davis, II as our new Vice Presi- dent		101
Please join us in wel- c o m i n g Daryl R. Davis, II to		1115
our staff as Vice Pres-		-
ident of Workforce	Development.	
Daryl is no stranger to Presbyteri- an Night Shelter, having served on the Board from 2016-2023, and as Board Chair in 2022 and 2023.		
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Daryl is Associate Minister at the Inspiring Temple of Praise church where Bishop R.D. Jordan is Senior Pastor. The evening was elevated to even higher ground with a soul stirring performance by Fort Worth's own, Pastor Milton & Shirley Pace and the very gifted Pace Family Singers, along with members of the Saintsville Cathedral Choir. Melanie Pace offered special thanks to the Black Chamber for their consideration of her during her valiant fight against cancer.

Another of Fort Worth's living legends in gospel music, Cornis Wells Cannon, gave a reassurance of God's continued mercy and grace with a rendition of GMWA's classic, "Safety". Other song leaders included, Dr. Perry N. Crenshaw, Stae Hall, Troy Nell Edmon, Katrina Battles, Kicia Robinson and Yolanda Ford. The M.C. for the evening was Stacy Marshall. Other

participants in this beautiful choir includes: Brenda Justice, Kaye Jones-McDonald, Lucy Cumby, Joann Brown, Avis J. Davis, Karen Davis, Barbara Greene, Minnie Gunter, Juanita Risher, Jewel Carroll, Minnie Kinney, Nancy S. Ewing, Daine Lampkin Thomas, Sheila K. Brice, Ara Brown, Deborah Ullibari, Melanie Fuller, Glad Campbell, Jackie Harden, Lela Manning, Linda Miller, Derrius Williams, Sharon Palm, Marian Evonne Mayfield, Erma Rogers, Angela Ashford Bell, Karen Taylor, Terri Swift-Gadsden, Ora Fletcher, Sarah Smith, Nelda Barrett Murraine, Jan Murphy-May, Annie Jones, Leon Risher, Pebelok Pinkston, Gregory Wesley, Robert Whitney, Robert Gunter, Michael Friend and Carl Perkins.

We give thanks to President Michelle Green-Ford and the Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce for their willingness and initiative to be an ongoing sponsor of Black History with what we all hope will be an annual event.









Streaming on Facebook Live

Pastor Donald F Wilson Jr. 1st Lady Rebecca Mack Wilson



CHURCHIN'



The Mississippi Mass Choir's 'The Promise,' Featuring Stan Jones & Myron Butler hits No. 1 on Billboard Gospel Airplay Chart



"The Promise" is the fourth song by The Mississippi Mass Choir to enter the Gospel Airplay chart. Their previous entries include "God's on Your Side" (which featured Le'Andrai Johnson and Stan Jones and peaked at number 16 in October 2014), "God Made Me" (reaching number 10 in May 2011), and "I'm Not Tired" (which climbed to number 5 in July 2005).

For Stan Jones, "The Promise" is his first song to lead the Gospel Airplay chart, among his two chart appearances. For the experienced gospel singer Myron Butler, this is his first chart-topping song in his eighth appearance on the chart. He also achieved another top 10 hit with his debut entry "Set Me Free," a duet with Levi, which reached number 3 in June 2006.

The Mississippi Mass Choir has a notable history on the Top Gospel Albums chart as well. Their debut self-titled album topped the chart for 17 weeks starting in August 1989. They also achieved num"God Gets the Glory" (for five weeks in 1992) and "It Remains To Be Seen..." (for 17 weeks between 1993 and 1994). Their latest album, "Declaration of Dependence," reached a peak position of number 8 in June 2014, marking the group's sixth top 10 album.

ber one spots with their albums

Around In the Community with Pastor Sharon Ford-Turner



Pic 1) 17th Annual Black History Women's Love Fellowship Event. Honored 7 African American Pioneer Women in Ft.Worth, TX. Dr. Shirley Knox-Benton, Carol Kirby Brown, Pastor Sonja Coleman, Donna Craddock, Donya Craddock, Atty. Bobbie Edmonds and Pastor Karen MyersHarris; Pic 2) All Assisting : Preshawn Ford, Rochelle Brown, Kathy Stephens, Edna Wilkins, Dr. Lyndia Thomas, Trinity and Mason Ford.



CHURCH DIRECTORY



CHURCHIN'

Community Action Partners seeks leaders for Advisory Council

The City of Fort Worth's Community Action Partners (CAP) is looking for community leaders to become a vital part of the organization's mission to create positive change in Tarrant County. Passionate and dedicated individuals are being sought to join the CAP Advisory Council.

Why it matters: As a board member, residents have the chance to directly influence and shape the future initiatives that will impact the lives of the community.

- The City of Fort Worth administers the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds for Tarrant County's low-income individuals and households.
- Agencies administering these funds are required to establish an Advisory Council to assist the agency in identifying the needs and priorities of low-income residents of Tarrant County who are eligible to receive assistance.
- Unique perspectives and ideas will play a crucial role in guiding the organization towards making a lasting difference.

What's next: An election will soon be held for vacant positions for the Community Action Partners Advisory Council representing low-income residents in the areas below.

Place 6. East and far southeast areas of Tarrant County, including Arlington and Grand Prairie:

EVERY WEDNESDAY - BIBLESTUDY

6:30 p.n

- (Stop Six, Poly, Kennedale and Mansfield areas) Candidates must live in the following ZIP codes: 75050, 75051, 75052, 76001-2, 76010-18, 76060, 76063, 76006, 76012, 76103, 76105, 76112, 76119, 76120 & 76155
- Place 10. North and Riverside (Fort Worth) areas of Tarrant County
- Candidates must live in the following ZIP codes: 75261, 76021, 76022, 76034, 76039, 76040, 76051, 76053, 76092, 76102, 76106, 76111, 76117, 76118, 76164, 76180, & 76262

Go deeper: Candidates must be over 18 years of age, reside in the service area and have obtained the required number of signatures supporting their candidacy for the Community Action Partners Council. These elected members serve a three-year term. but no more than six consecutive years.

The petition requires the signatures of 25 residents who will nominate you as a candidate. The petition may be scanned and emailed to residents.

Ready to take the leap and be a force for good? Applications and additional information can be obtained by contacting Mayra Trevino at 817-392-5786.

Submit your application and petition by Friday, March 8. 2024.

The election will be held Tuesday, March 26, 2024, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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ome get it themselves.

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BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE Topic: SHEEP AND SHEPHERDS



ter herbs

underground

(Gen. 26:19)

the still '

(Ps. 23:2, KIV)

23 To David: "I chose you

were tending your

land" (2 Sam. 7:8)

setto

DOWN

24 Songs sung by abrupt

alternations between a

natural voice and a fal-

2 "On top of these blan-

of rams' skins, dyed

red" (Exod. 26:14)

3 Sheep tenders

(Gen. 46:32)

kets is placed a

sheep in the pasture-

to be the _____ of my

people Israel when you

22 "He leadeth me beside

ACROSS

- I "There is a friend who
- sticks _____ than a brother"
- (Prov. 18:24) 5 "I took two shepherd's ____, naming
- one Grace and the
- other Union, and I fed the flock" (Zech. 11:7)
- 8 Me, reflexively
- (Gen. 16:5) 9 Elevated structures on
- which sheep are sacrificed (Exod. 20:24)
- 10 Curved upper support over an opening (Acts 4:11)
- II Contagious disease that spreads rapidly
- (I Kings 8:37) 13 Quote from Psalm
- 100:3 about our relationship to God: 4 wds. 16 Annual Hebrew cere-
- mony when roast
 - lamb is eaten with bit-A Q D E I Z F E V D E K



- 4 Rouse; stimulate; make like new again (Exod. 12:8, 11) 18 Salt Lake City's state (Isa. 32:2) 20 Flow of water from
 - 5 Hindu religious teacher; yogi
 - 6 Small, unusually wise insect (Prov. 30:24, 25) 7 Capable of producing abundant plant life (Gen. 13:10)
 - 12 Completely tired or worn out (Gen. 25:29) 14 "Follow God's ____ in
 - everything you do just as a much loved child imitates his father" (Eph. 5:1)
 - 15 Thin; gaunt (Ezek. 34:20) 17 Energy; force; determi-
 - nation (Ps. 38:19) 19 Month of the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt (Deut. 16:1)
 - 21 Ohio's neighbor: abbr.



HELP WANTED

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