

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

Ann Arbor, Michigan

VISION 2020

Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Habakkuk 2: 2 – 3 NRSV

We praise and thank God for the good and great things that he has done and continues to do in our midst. God has blessed Bethel. Our congregation continues to grow, spiritually, numerically, and financially. New ministries have been created, and older ministries have been reimagined. We continue to expand our outreach through risk – taking mission and service demonstrated in our local, regional and international partnerships.

As African Methodists, we strive to honor our denominational legacy through a deep commitment to social justice, and celebration of our history and heritage.

In 2020, we pray and believe that the Lord will continue to bless us as we strive to honor him through worship, witness and service. To that end, the following is what we believe is God's vision for Bethel for the next twelve months. It is not a strategic plan, (which will come at a later time), nor is it a contract with the congregation. It is a vision, a spiritual glimpse of what is to come. As with all visions, this vision is constantly evolving and developing as we follow the lead of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, all decisions will move through the appropriate channels of the Steward Board, Trustee Board, Official Board, Church Conference, and Quarterly Conference as per the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

I. CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

a. Scholarship Ministry

For years, the Juanita Woods Scholarship has blessed young people at Bethel A.M.E. Church. In 2018, the Scholarship Ministry was reimagined in order to maintain Bethel's commitment to education and young people. As we discern God's will for Bethel in 2020 we propose:

- Encouraging named scholarships and book awards to support students of the congregation and community.
- Partnering with educational institution and organizations which focus on college readiness and transition into two-year and four-year schools of higher education.
- Providing scholarship support to Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- *Timeline – Spring/ Summer 2020*

b. Youth and Children’s Ministry

In 2018, Mrs. Leslie Evans was appointed the Director of the Young People’s and Children’s Division and has helped to reinvigorate that ministry in the life of Bethel. In 2019 Mr. Les Davis helped to establish Bethel’s Cub Scout Pack, and later in the year Ms. Benita Criglar led the Youth Dance Ministry. Dr. Karra Evans continues to work with the coordination of our Children’s Church and the Church School Department provides classes for children each Sunday morning. While we praise and thank God for the work that has been done, there is still more for us to do. As we discern God’s will for Bethel in 2020, we propose:

- Enhancing our Children’s Church through recruiting and organizing volunteers.
- Creating a position for a Youth and Young Adult Minister.
- Reestablish a Youth Choir at Bethel.
- Reestablish Bethel’s Campus Ministry for college and graduate students.
- * Envisioning a Literacy Ministry for Early Readers.
- *Timeline – Spring/ Summer 2020*

c. Christian Education

As believers, God desires us to be intentional in our faith development and formation. One way in which we do that is through making Bible Study, Church School and other opportunities to learn and grow priorities. As we discern God’s will for Bethel in 2020, we propose:

- Establishing additional Bible Studies and Church School classes
- Developing a Christian Education Ministry to plan courses, workshops and events throughout the year to inspire, inform and educate our congregation.
- *Timeline – Spring 2020*

d. Safety and Security Ministry

Since 2015, there has been an unprecedented number of attacks on houses of worship in the United States. While we will not live in fear, we will remain vigilant in order to protect members of our congregation and guest from external and internal threats. In 2018 that Safety and Security Ministry was expanded and has since undergone training and implemented changes. As we discern God's will for Bethel in 2020, we propose:

- Investing in safety and security equipment.
- Placing appropriate signage in and around the church.
- Creating a series of workshops providing information regarding congregational and community safety.
- Implementing regularly scheduled evacuation drills.
- *Timeline – Spring 2020*

II. OUTREACH

a. Belize Mission Trip 2020

In 2018 and 2019, Bethel engaged in its first mission trip to Belize, Central America. During our time there we were able to share the love of Christ and engage with God's people in a different part of the world. We provided supplies and services to Dorothy Menzie's Children's Home, Belize Central Prison, Senior Citizen's Residential Community, Auntie's Place Women's Resource Center, and hosted a Health Fair which provided free screenings and medical supplies for local residents. As we discern God's will for Bethel in 2020 we propose:

- Returning to Belize for our third mission trip. November 12 – 15, 2020.
- Partnering with Minister Laurier Vaughn for the establishment of an A. M. E. Church in Belize.
- *Timeline – Autumn 2020*

b. Literacy Ministry for Early Readers.

Nearly 68% of third graders are not meeting grade appropriate expectations in reading. As a congregation committed to education and young people, we do not take lightly what can be described as a crisis in our community. As we discern God's will for Bethel in 2020, we propose:

Establishing a literacy ministry for early readers with the following aims:

- Encouraging children to read by providing children of Bethel with books and establishing a reading club for children within the congregation and community.
- Partnering with local and national organizations which focus on literacy.
- Identifying space within Bethel to serve as a Library/ Media Center.
- Establishing a summer academy/ camp which focuses on literacy.
- *Timeline – Spring/ Summer 2020.*

III. PHYSICAL PLANT

a. 1507 Traver Road

In 2008, Bethel made the wise investment of purchasing the house at 1507 Traver Road, immediately adjacent to current church property. For the last twelve years, 1507 has housed our church's administrative offices. As we discern God's vision for Bethel in 2020 we propose:

- Paying off the balance of the mortgage, which is currently, \$41,600.
- Moving our church administrative offices to the 900 John A Woods property.
- Reimagine the use of 1507 Traver as an income producing asset that can bless both the congregation and community.
- *Timeline – Summer 2020*

b. Church Vehicles

Our church van and bus have served the congregation well by providing transportation for members on Sunday morning to worship, and throughout the year for other church sponsored outings. However, there comes a time when it makes more financial sense to purchase/lease a newer vehicle rather than continuing to repair the current vehicle(s). As we discern God's vision for Bethel in 2020 we will:

- Develop a committee of trustees and church members to determine our transportation needs for Bethel and create a proposal for presentation to the church conference.
- *Timeline – Summer 2020*

c. Lower Level

Bethel's lower level consists of five large Sunday School Classrooms, the Finance Room, the Furnace Room, two offices, storage closets, and bathroom facilities. While we are blessed with this space and it has been well-maintained, it is in need of renovation. While we are blessed with this awesome space, it has not been renovated in several decades. As a congregation whose core values include the nurture and development of young people, the space needs to meet the needs of this population. It needs to be inviting, inspiring and engaging.

Furthermore, access to the lower level is limited, and requires negotiating one of two long, steep, narrow staircases. As we discern God's will for Bethel in 2020, we propose.

- Renovating Bethel's Lower Level.
- Conducting a feasibility study for an elevator to provide access to the lower level.
- **Timeline – Autumn 2020**

d. Parking Lot, Landscaping

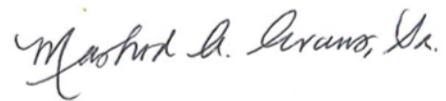
We are blessed to be a vibrant and growing congregation; however our current parking lot can only accommodate 52 vehicles. As a commuter congregation, this presents a challenge in an increasing developing community in which street parking is becoming more scarce. Furthermore, our parking lot and the grounds of Bethel are the first "welcome signs" that greet visitors upon their arrival. As we discern God's will for Bethel in 2020, we propose:

- Resurfacing and striping of church parking lot to accommodate more cars.
- Allocating more handicapped accessible spaces.
- Developing a comprehensive landscaping plan for the church grounds.
- **Timeline – Spring Summer 2020**

More than print and paper, I firmly believe that this vision is God's desire for Bethel over and beyond the next year. This is by no means an exhaustive or all-inclusive plan for the life of our congregation but it is a way forward, these are our next faithful steps, and it gives direction to some of the things we will be doing here at Bethel in the days, weeks, months, and years to come.

In order to accomplish that which the Lord has before we will be asked to give of our time, our talent and our financial resources. As we grow in new directions, it will require prayer, participation, persistence and patience. The vision is unfolding. The journey begins.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mashod A. Evans, Sr.".

Rev. Mashod A. Evans, Sr.,
Pastor