

CREATED TO WORSHIP: RESCUING THE LOCAL CHURCH  
FROM HAVING A GOOD TIME

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## ABSTRACT

### CREATED TO WORSHIP: RESCUING THE LOCAL CHURCH FROM HAVING A GOOD TIME

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This project explores how worship has evolved in the Black church over the years, and is more than just “A Good Time”. “A Good Time” is a phrase used in some church circles that expresses the desire to enjoy oneself at any expense. Whether it is through singing one’s favorite song, hearing a catchy phrase, or creating one’s own atmosphere *without* the prompting of the Holy Spirit, a good time is enjoyment at the expense of others.

“We had church today!” “I really enjoyed myself.” or “Didn’t we have a good time?” These are just a few of the lines that can be heard as the members converse amongst themselves as they exit the church on Sunday. This has been an ongoing occurrence at First Calvary Baptist Church for many years. After having very talented and gifted pastors, musicians and choirs that were excellent presenters, many of the members equate the quality of the worship service to the preacher’s or musicians’ performance. Performance is used juxtaposed to presentation as a way of expressing self-glorification of the artist. Many worship leaders put themselves on display and ignore their true responsibility of bringing worshipers in closer relationship with God.

This project aims to educate members of First Calvary Baptist Church about worship, worship leadership, worship history in the context of the Black church, and the responsibility of

members in the worship experience. My goal is to provide First Calvary Baptist Church a more meaningful worship experience. This project compares the worship practices of slaves in the “invisible institutions (the underground black church not under the auspices of white oppressors)” to contemporary worship styles of today. The liberating “holy dance,” that once freed the slave from the heinous hand of oppression, has now bound the church of today by self-indulgence and misunderstanding.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this work to my brother, the late Anthony Tyrone Harris, who always knew that there was more to church, and also knew that there was more to me. I love you.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, let me give thanks and honor to God for all of the wonderful things that He has done in my life. I would be nothing without Him and for that I am grateful.

I would also like to thank the many individuals that have spoken words of encouragement to me down through the years. I am excited that I lived long enough to actually accomplish and become what you have always called me. This is both an exciting and adventurous time in my life and I owe so much to everybody.

I also want to thank my wife and son for their support in this endeavor. Their sacrifice of time and understanding has been invaluable during this process. Additionally, I thank my parents, Deacon Eddie F. Harris and Missionary Denise D. Harris, whose undying support has helped me to achieve this goal. Your love for God and His church has lit a fire in me that could never be quenched. I love you both and may God continue to bless you.

I also thank my family, both extended and immediate, for the encouragement and motivation to the completion of this project. Without your love and support I would never have made it this far.

I would also like to thank my advisor, Dr. Gary V. Simpson who was very informative and insightful during this process.

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## INTRODUCTION

Many churches have moved from reverent, empowering worship to worship that simply panders to the emotions. This is especially evident at the First Calvary Baptist Church of New York City.

Individuals who attend church only to seek out a “good time,” can be characterized as selfish, narcissistic individuals that only want to enjoy themselves. They can also be seen as using church as a means of escaping from the onslaught of everyday life. Some might say, “I have had bad ordeals and situations all week, but when I get to church, that choir better sing until I feel better and that preacher better preach me “happy.” This is certainly not God centered worship, but self-centered worship seeking a performance.

Performance is used as a way of expressing or glorifying the person in the spotlight. Many who call themselves worship leaders put themselves on display and ignore their true responsibility of bringing worshipers in closer relationship with God, thus worship transforms into entertainment.

Although I have witnessed very talented and gifted pastors, musicians and choirs that were excellent presenters, many members of First Calvary Baptist evaluate the quality of the worship service on the basis of the preacher’s “whoop”<sup>1</sup> or musicians’ performance. As First Calvary Baptist Church (FCBC) membership explores reasons why worship is not just about a “good time,” we will increase our awareness that worship is also about responding to God for being the Great “I AM ” through prayer, praise, preaching, singing, stewardship and yes, even silence. I am always reminded at the end of worship, that service to God and creation is reinforced as the pastor lifts his/her hands

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<sup>1</sup> “Whooping” is a style of preaching known within the African American community.



and recites, “We have entered to worship, we depart to serve.” This blessing, or benediction, helps to inform the congregation that they have been charged to go out into the world and make a difference. The members of the congregation are reminded that the worship experience is to enable them to seek God with passion and to guide them in their daily life. .

It is the intention of the author to provide information that will help members look past the urge to have a good time and embrace Godly worship practices. These practices will be taught through a series of workshops and group discussions. Additionally, we will attempt to give a brief survey of worship practices taken from various settings in African American churches.

### **Lay Advisory Committee**

In order to get this project started, I selected eight members from FCBC to assist in implementing this project. Members on the Lay Advisory Committee are committed worshipers that have never worked in an administrative or decision making capacity within the church. These members are not leaders within the congregation. However, they are people that have a great love for the church and its well-being. The Lay Advisory Committee consists of hard working men and women who are either employed or retired. These individuals do their best on a weekly basis to see that the secular needs of the church are met. Whether it is sweeping, cleaning, turning on the heat before service, repairing things that are broken or giving financial donations, they keep the church running. I thought that this project would be a good way to get them more involved and engaged in the spiritual ministry of the church.

The Lay Advisory Committee was given the directive to identify a general issue of concern within FCBC. In our initial meetings, discussion topics included making information packets so that visitors would know our church history, reinstating the practice of deacons accompanying worshipers that were walking down the aisle for call to discipleship and establishing a youth outreach program for teenage members who are not attending church services. Finally, the group wanted to evaluate the low attendance for Sunday School and Bible Study.

Upon reviewing the issues of concern brought by my Lay Advisory Committee, I began to hone in on a topic that would be more encompassing and best benefit our time and research together. With much prayer and thinking, I came to the conclusion that focusing on the worship experience would be most beneficial. Worship is not often discussed at First Calvary Baptist Church; it is just something that is attended. Even though many of the committee's concerns were not geared toward worship, I made the executive decision to highlight the issue of concern that I witnessed. I felt that if we were going to have a transformative experience at First Calvary Baptist Church we had to address an issue that universally affects the membership- worship.

When the Lay Advisory Committee was asked about their views on worship, many of them had very generic views like: "Worship is a part of who I am." "Worship is important to believers." and "Worship is what we do on Sunday." With this input I was able to see the potential for expanding our thoughts and views on worship to more meaningful, concrete and universal understandings.

Many of the Lay Advisory Committee members agreed FCBC has many members who do not have a full grasp of what worship is all about. In one of the Lay Advisory

meetings a member commented that in the rear of the sanctuary worshipers were being distracted by individuals talking, passing notes, texting, and walking in and out of the service. It was additionally stated that these issues have escalated over the years, and have now become the norm for this church community. Anything goes! After I was made aware of this situation, I changed my seat in the choir loft in order to confirm the observations brought to my attention. My observations substantiated the worshiper's remarks and this motivated me to pursue an opportunity to "make the difference" in this church community with hopes that it will change the behavior of members of First Calvary Baptist Church.

The Lay Advisory Committee accepted the project and fully embraced the tasks of helping to design a pretest and post-test, talking with members about participating in the workshops and generally encouraging members of the congregation to support efforts to promote a more meaningful worship experience. Their concern for the church and its healthy growth and development was of the utmost importance to the Committee. Their desire to see this event succeed was inspirational and rewarding.

Much of the work of this project would not have been accomplished if it had not been for the help of the Lay Advisory Committee. They took it upon themselves to share in this educational experience and assisted me in whatever was needed. Their devotion to this project was key to its implementation and completion.

There is a thin line that the researcher, as an observer, must walk in the implementation of an investigative project. Observers must be careful not to create an environment or approach that makes participants in their congregational research their new "guinea pig." Instead, observers must demonstrate an authentic concern for the

people and the institution involved in the investigation, in this case, the church and the well-being of its membership.

James Hopewell states, “A church member must become more of an “observing participant” than a participant observer, because the member is already an insider and accustomed to the values and behavior that he or she must now study objectively.”<sup>2</sup> I realized that I had to become sensitive to the impact of disruptive behaviors in our church environment that had become routine practices.

One of the hardest things to do is to be a participant and an observer at the same time. Trying to get involved in the worship and watch the worship can be a “painstaking” ordeal. Trying to watch what others are doing or saying, keeping up with the information, and asking thoughtful questions can make this aspect of the project overwhelming. James Hopewell states:

A persistent curiosity nags observing participants. They look at routine events and hear common expressions as if for the first time. They now take nothing for granted. They listen intently to both formal and spontaneous discourse; they examine signs and gestures; they read all that is written; they do not avoid embarrassing episodes and fights. Shortly after any observation they must write down the details of what they have experienced, because the act of recording the event is crucial to its understanding. They become not only specialists in construing the parish story but also its literary critic, gaining enough distance to assess what the story means, to explore its setting, trace its plot, and consider its character.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the information that is attained can be invaluable in building a more thoughtful and more worshipful congregation.

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<sup>2</sup>James Hopewell, *Congregations: Stories and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 88-89.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

With the assistance of the Lay Advisory Committee, I was able to investigate the perceived meaning of our worship at First Calvary Baptist Church. The research was designed to incorporate several workshops (Worship through Music, Worship in the Family, Worship in the Church and Worship through Finances) to give members tools to enhance their worship experience on Sunday morning and beyond.

### **The Workshops**

Because music is an integral part of the worship experience at FCBC, much of the effort and detail of the workshops pertained to music and musical presentation. At the beginning of worship, the choir processes down the aisle on a song, followed by a chant in which the congregation joins the choir. Afterward, the congregational hymn is sung and then the choir sings three selections. Should the pastor not decide to sing, the preached word comes forth followed by an altar song, presented by the pastor, for those who stand or come forward for prayer. There is an invitation song for persons who have accepted Christ as Savior; and finally, another song by the pastor for the Benediction.

The workshop on music explored various aspects of worship music and its role in worship at FCBC. Church members had become lackadaisical in their approach to worship music. There was no preparation for worship, especially from the choir. Rehearsal was not undertaken with reverence and choir members preferred to take advantage of an expansive repertoire. Since there were so many songs to choose from, choir members felt that it was easier to sing a previously memorized selection as opposed to learning something new. In addition, few of the choir members could articulate their mission and purpose in music ministry. Also, there was a lack of honor for God's time.

Members felt that if they showed up, that was good enough. But it is important to make a presentation in the spirit of excellence that God requires.

The workshop on family was to assist members who wanted to incorporate worship in their home or extend an opportunity for worship to their family. Furthermore, this workshop was designed to help families bridge the gap between church and home. When worship is executed in the home, it does not seem strange and foreign when experienced on Sunday morning.

In order to give “unchurched” members a better understanding of worship, workshops on worship were designed to explain why we worship and who we worship. These workshops were intended to help create an ongoing worship experience in both the home and the church.

The workshop on finances was not presented due to inclement weather. I am reminded of the impact financial struggles have on spirituality as I listen to prayers and engage in dialogue with members throughout the congregation. Many opportunities are difficult to pursue due to a lack of education and experience. Such disadvantages create a struggle to survive and to meet the basic necessities of life. I do believe that this workshop could have been extremely beneficial to the members of FCBC.

In general, all of the workshops were positive, helpful experiences that benefitted the participants and had an impact on the congregation.

CHAPTER ONE  
ISSUES OF CONCERN

Drew University's Credo Reference defines worship as a compound noun meaning 'worthiness'. It was formed from the adjective *worth* and the noun suffix -*ship* 'state, condition', and at first was used for 'distinction, credit, dignity'.<sup>1</sup> Worship then suggests that individuals should ascribe a value to God. In other words, "How much is God worth to you?" When this question is taken into account, individuals have a responsibility to make a contribution to the value and 'worth' of God.

Humanity is constantly expressing worship through life, nature, education, poetry, music, art, etc. Whether praising the beauty of the mountains, flowers, art, or presentations, individuals are constantly ascribing worth to something. We express worship to these contributions because they spark an interest. These experiences make us feel connected to the world as a whole. Worship in the world helps individuals become more conscious of identity as a community and aware of what life is all about. J. Wendell Mapson notes, "Worship forms and practices have been designed to assist in humankind's quest to find meaning and purpose. And music has been part and parcel of deity worship from the dawn of civilization."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Word Origins*, "Worship," <http://www.credoreference.com.ezproxy.drew.edu/entry/acbwordorig/worship> (accessed August 07, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> J. Wendell Mapson, *The Ministry of Music in the Black Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1984), 9.

One of the key components of the Black Church is the worship experience.<sup>3</sup> It is in the worship experience that members have an opportunity to unwind from the pressures of everyday life and experience the presence of God. In *The Ministry of Music in the Black Church*, Mapson explains what black worship is, and says, “It is the corporate reflection by black people upon the acts of God as he responds to the theological, sociocultural, and political needs of black people.”<sup>4</sup>

Mapson suggests, “Music has always been a necessary thread in the fabric out of which the human spirit was created. From ancient times to the present day, music has filled in the gaps made by humanity’s attempt to express the inexpressible.”<sup>5</sup> Many African American churches have rendered their voices in songs to God through worship, incorporating Mapson’s theory. They have sung out of oppression and despair searching for hope and freedom. From the voices of the slaves moaning in the cotton fields of the South, to the rhythm and blues of contemporary gospel artists; all have lifted their voices to worship God, which brings into question: What is the Black worship experience of First Calvary Baptist Church?

If FCBC members are attending church only to have a “good time,” is their worship contaminated by their own fleshly desires? Members often desire the church to be therapeutic and cathartic in the release from their worldly problems; however, they fail to worship God in the Spirit. “Having a good time” replaces true worship experiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Black Church.

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<sup>3</sup> Worship experience is a term that will be used to express services that are held for members.

<sup>4</sup> J. Wendell Mapson, *The Ministry of Music in the Black Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1984), 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 9.



This project is written with the hopes that worship within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Black Church will not disgrace or shame the slave and early Black Church that worshipped God in the “spontaneity of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>6</sup> Melvin Costen says, “One cannot teach worship solely from liturgical documents that exclude the history and culture of those whose understanding of God in Jesus Christ is uniquely contextualized in suffering and struggle. Probing personal and corporate memories as an African American is an adventuresome journey, with documentation and testing along the way.”<sup>7</sup> It is for this cause, the author desires to bring dignity and clarity to worship in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Black Church through education and practice.

Just as many church members are connected to a two thousand year old tradition on the first Sunday of the month called The Lord’s Supper, African Americans are also connected to a rich history of worship that includes the legacy of slaves, freed men and women, denominations and religious practices. Whether an individual worships in a church, on a job, in a school, or in a small group, worship is connected to a larger, historical context that helps bring individuals closer to God. Melva Costen states:

African American Christians gathered and engaged in worship, regardless of denomination, share many things in common. First and foremost, they gather to offer thanks and praise to God in and through Jesus the Christ, and to be spiritually fed by the Word of God! In response to God’s call and by God’s grace, communities of faith gather to affirm God’s providence and power.<sup>8</sup>

One of the ways the Black Church worship experience was forged was through music. The lows and highs, moans and groans, the extended range and velocity in the voice; these were some of the techniques and skills that were implemented in the worship

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<sup>6</sup> Melva Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

experience. Whatever would allow the worshiper to feel connected and close to God was widely embraced within the worship community. The musical overtones in African American worship, “extends deep into the nurturing center of the African soil.”<sup>9</sup>

I have been a musician in the Black Church for more than twenty five years. Some of the titles I have been issued include: Director, Minister of Music, Chief Musician and Worship and Arts Director just to name a few. My desire has always been to give God my best in my weekly presentations to Him. I never wanted members to be touched by music alone; but rather, the Holy Spirit. As I began to contemplate project phase, I wanted to tackle issues of concern which resonated with me. One of the questions that I often ask myself is, “Is there something more to worship, or was this just another good time?” “Will people leave church changed? Or will they leave with wet clothes from praising the Lord and tired from their euphoric expression?”

These questions have led me to deeply devote myself to reading and researching in the area of worship. I desired to go deeper and not have what Melva Costen calls “a surface Afro centric mindset”.<sup>10</sup> She further notes that, “This happens most often when there is insufficient research to become rooted in the knowledge of the plethora of African cultures on the continent and in the African Diaspora.”<sup>11</sup>

The worship experience was not created and established from creeds, declarations, and affirmations of faith that are in high circulation today within the Black Church. Melva Costen notes, “There was little if any concern during this early period for

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Melva Costen, *In Spirit and In Truth: The Music of African American Worship* (Louisville: Westminster, John Knox Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

adherence to denominational polity, recitation of creeds, or acceptable employment of superimposed, predetermined liturgical action. There was concern for the exposition and hearing of biblical truths that had meaning for an enslaved people.”<sup>12</sup> Dr. James Cone speaks the same sentiments in his book *God of the Oppressed* when he says, “Blacks do not ask whether Jesus is one with the Father or divine and human, though the orthodox formulations are implied in their language. They ask whether Jesus is walking with them, whether they can call him upon the “telephone of prayer” and tell him all about their troubles.”<sup>13</sup>

For many slaves in America, debating the deeper theological constructs was not the order of the day. Slaves in America were fighting just to live another day. Worship for them was a way to release from the anguish, heart ache and pain of slavery. Worship allowed the slave to connect to a God and a savior that was free. Melva Costen says:

The invisible environment allowed free space, God’s space, where enslaved worshippers could hear an anticipated message of hope in God’s word. The personhood of each worshipper could be affirmed. The community could experience freedom-divine freedom- in Christ. Each time a member of the community of faith experienced freedom from bondage or a physical healing moment, the total community would vicariously experience a new found freedom.<sup>14</sup>

This project was birthed out of wanting to educate myself and the members of First Calvary Baptist Church about their Black worship heritage. It is my desire to share with the members of First Calvary Baptist Church the origin of African worship and how it has shaped worship in the African American church today. Music seems to be the one area which resonates throughout African American churches in the United States. Melva

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>13</sup> James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 13.

<sup>14</sup> Costen, Melva Wilson. *In Spirit and in Truth: The Music of African American Worship* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 3.

Costen notes, “Africa is the anchor that holds music as the theological thread that runs through the fabric of African American existence.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, this project connects the dots of today’s worship with the African slave brought to America during the Diaspora.<sup>16</sup>

There is a strong connection to the practices and rituals that were instituted by the American slave and what is practiced in today’s Black Church. Dialogue about worship in the Black Church has not taken much precedence, but is gaining momentum in a more enquiring society. Dr. Costen notes, “Traditionally, worship has not been a subject for discussion or theological discourse for African Americans. It is a divine experience, a dynamic happening, which in itself is a form of communication of obedience to God.”<sup>17</sup> For this cause, as a musician, I feel the call to teach and educate about worship and music in the Black Church.

I am also aware that the musician can be an instigator for worshipers who come to church to “get their praise on.”<sup>18</sup> Music often plays a pivotal role in what transpires within the worship service and often initiates “good times”. As musicians are sometimes inclined to, and encouraged to promote, certain behaviors, the musician must seek to discern that their music coincides with the move of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the musician can act as a pseudo-spirit initiator.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Melva Costen, *African American Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 92.

<sup>18</sup> These are people that come to church waiting for the musician to give them some music so they can dance around the church and enjoy themselves. There is no movement of the Spirit upon these individuals. It is clearly them having a good time.

In order to minimize the occurrence of “good time worship” at First Calvary Baptist Church, I have taken measures to give solos to choir members that are not vocally strong, removed the microphone from the organ and included more congregational singing in the worship service. J. Wendell Mapson warns against the temptation of the musician to become an entertainer.<sup>19</sup> Musicians not attuned to their ministry responsibility can mistakenly rely on their musical training and not on the move of the Holy Spirit to drive their presentations in worship. The ultimate desire of the musician should be for God to be lifted up and glorified through their musical presentation. The music shared in a worship service should bring the listeners closer to Christ.

The introduction of new music and worship practices in the Black Church has historically provoked a high level of opposition from the congregation because members will not to embrace differentiated styles of worship. Daniel Payne notes:

Bethel Church of Philadelphia struggled with the changeover from the “old” style of singing in the “common way,” by rote, to the “new” style of singing by note. The first introduction to choral singing into the A.M.E. Church gave great offense to the older members, especially those who had professed personal sanctification. They said: “You have brought the devil into the church and therefore, we will go out.” So suiting to the action for the word, many went out of Bethel, and never returned.<sup>20</sup>

Even if religious denominations have distinctly different creeds and missions, and each body of believers has their own unique worship styles, it is my observation that one thing remains the same- members want to come to church to have a good time. “Good time” is defined as members enjoying themselves and the actions and contributions of others to the worship service as opposed to receiving a life changing message either through Word or song.

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<sup>19</sup> J. Mapson, *The Ministry of Music in the Black Church* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1984), 71.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 152

Some individuals have a negative opinion of highly emotive forms of worship. However, it is important to note that for many years, the church was the one place slaves and African Americans could go for therapeutic and cathartic release from the “troubles of the world.” J. Wendell Mapson says, “In the Black Church, purpose was also found in the midst of oppression. In worship, blacks had a good time. They affirmed who they were as well as who God is. They cast burdens on the altar. They were reminded that each of them was somebody and fellowshiped with members of their extended families. They received power to go on a little while longer. Such is the historical meaning of worship in the black experience.”<sup>21</sup>

In FCBC, many of the members face systemic oppression. Whether members are looking for jobs, educational opportunities, affordable housing or economic stability, church becomes a place where members can “let their hair down”.<sup>22</sup> Sometimes church is the only place where one can find a release from the cares and pressures of life and be embraced by a community of believers in support. Yet, there is a thin line between members who are moved by the spontaneity of the Holy Spirit and those just having a “good time.”

### **Hollywood Expectations**

Hollywood has created an anticipated behavior within the Black movie industry about the Black Church. At some levels, Hollywood has belittled and demeaned the black worship experience to appear as just a “good time.” Typical scenes create a preacher preaching a sermon that has no content or substance, people running, clapping, and choreographed dances with rhythmic music. Whether you watch the 1989 Disney

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<sup>21</sup> J. Mapson, *The Ministry of Music in the Black Church* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1984), 40.

<sup>22</sup>This is an idiom used as an expression of relief from cares or worries.

movie *Polly*; the scene of 1996 movie *Don't be a Menace*; the television series *Martin*, or Tyler Perry's 2008 movie *Meet the Browns*, all have portrayed the Black Church as a caricature of worship. For the most part, Hollywood is held blameless for the manner in which the cultural rituals and religious practices in the Black Church are depicted. John C. Banks notes in his essay on Black Church Music:

“Black Church is not, nor has ever been, monolithic. Contrary to practically every television and movie depiction of black worshippers in fancy choir robes singing gospel music and swaying and clapping, there exists another worship style that is absent from the purview of mainstream society.”<sup>23</sup>

However, Hollywood scenes do not serve a real purpose in the true experience of the Holy Spirit. In essence, when a real move of the Holy Spirit takes place, there is a high level of spontaneity and power. Hollywood tends to capitalize on the tail end of the moving of the Holy Spirit, which is invalid since it does not capture the moment in its totality. This is the expectations that paying Europeans desire to experience as hundreds line up to board charter busses to be spectators at Black Churches all over Harlem every Sunday. The Black worship experience has become very lucrative for the tourism industry that promotes the expectation of witnessing gospel singing and authentic Black worship. The money that could go into struggling churches in Harlem is swapped between bus companies, tour guides and soul food restaurants all selling the black worship experience as some field trip to watch a show.

It can be speculated that tourists come into Black Churches expecting to see something unusual, or what they have seen on television and movies, as they take out cameras, videos and recording devices, all while sitting attentively hoping to take

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<sup>23</sup> John C. Banks, 2007, Black Church Music: An Essay on the "Other" Worship Experience of Black Mainline Protestants. *Journal of Religious Thought* 59/60, (1) (06): 161-164, <http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/222116112?accountid=10558> (accessed August 7, 2013).

something back home to show family and friends. However, there is a growing irritation between Black Churches in Harlem and tourists with their Hollywood expectations.

According to Mail Online, “The crowds of foreigners, some who arrive by tour groups, are becoming a source of irritation among faithful churchgoers creating rules for those who tiptoe in and out of services and take pictures and video.”<sup>24</sup>

Stories of pastors clashing with tourists who come into Black Churches looking for a “good time” are becoming more prevalent. The article further notes that the pastor of Mother AME Zion gave a stern warning to tourists arriving late, “We’re hoping that you will remain in place during the preaching of the Gospel.”<sup>25</sup> This is a common thread among Black Churches in Harlem that are trying to stay afloat financially and reverence God at the same time. Many of these churches have seen a decline in membership and finances, yet, they try to find a way to embrace tourists who desire to worship God in a different cultural context; rather than take away trophies and snapshots for their social media friends.

Many websites, blogs and social media advertise great Gospel music experiences and having a “good time,” which heightens the expectation of tourists to see what they have seen depicted on television. Nevertheless, tourists must realize that Black worship comes from a context that is much deeper than they can see on the surface. It is something movies have done a terrible job at expressing and outsiders often fail to

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<sup>24</sup> Daily Reporter, "*They Want to See What They've Seen in the Movies: How Harlem's Churches are Being Overrun by Gospel Tourists.*" Mail Online, March 09, 2012, News section, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2112798/Harlem-churches-overrun-gospel-tourists-swarming-services-tour-buses-guides-promising-soulful-shows.html> (accessed July 29, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



explore. The black worship experience is more than a good time; it is life changing and promotes individuals to action.

The author desires to create a new level of expectation for tourists that come into the Black Church. It is an expectation that tourists desire to be taught the diverse history of Black worship as opposed to what might have been seen on television. The images that the media portray diminish the cultural, social and spiritual value of sharing in a rich, long-standing legacy of worship in Black Churches. The media is robbing tourists and visitors of the opportunity of experiencing God in a new way by giving viewers the “cookie cutter” Black worship experience.

### **Pastor’s Expectations**

Pastors often find themselves in the precarious position of playing into the desires of what mainstream worshipers are looking for and presenting and creating a thought provoking, God centered worship experience. Often the worship experience of a particular group of believers is based on a pattern of rituals and traditions that the congregations have submitted to over a period of time. Hopewell notes, “By congregating, human beings are implicated in a plot, in a corporate historicity that links us to a specific past, that thickens and unfolds a particular present, and that holds out a future open to transformation. Congregational story is a household confession that recognizes the continuing participation of the church in the passage of events.”<sup>26</sup> As the pastor prays and hones in on what God would have him/her to do, he/she must also be aware of worship practices that were there before they got there.

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<sup>26</sup> James Hopewell, *Congregations: Stories and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 160.

As many tourists come into churches, pastors cater to the Hollywood perception that is typical of a Black Church scene in a Tyler Perry movie. This has led some pastors to hire musicians and singers, not because of their relationship with God, but their ability to recreate these scenes that are prominent in the film industry. Many musicians have no connection or relationship with the church and consider the church as another gig. For some musicians, the church has no spiritual connotation, but is taken on as a source of disposable income.

Often pastors try to comply with the “Hollywood Worship Mentality” and conform to its demands. But the media should have absolutely no bearing on what the church does. The worship practice should be steeped in deep reverence for God and worshipers’ past experiences as we find hope and comfort in God. When pastors comply with the tourist demands and sing, “O Happy Day” and “Amazing Grace” every Sunday, they sell their worship experience as cheap and worthless; they have missed out on the worthiness of God.

I have suffered adverse opposition from pastors who desire to give their members entertaining, Hollywood worship experiences. In all honesty, my job depended on teaching the latest music on the radio; regardless if it had a Christian message or not. I was made to “pump the organ” in order to create an anticipated outcome from the members. I have found myself thumbing through top ten catalogue Gospel music in order to give both the pastor and the members what they want; leaving little room for the intervention of the Holy Spirit as people get their weekly good time fix.

It would be beneficial to embrace the traditions of their congregation’s worship experience, and yet, bring something new to an ever evolving group of worshipers. After

all, when new individuals come into an established community, they bring a new dynamic to an established group. It is important to see how a congregation can embrace this new individual, without losing who they are as a community of believers.

Pastors often compete to attract younger worshipers and music is one of the first strategies on the agenda. Gospel choirs and groups are in high demand. Presenting electrifying music might be a great way to draw a more youthful audience, but one must be careful not to turn Sunday morning worship into a weekend nightclub. Youth are looking for meaningful and worthwhile events to connect to, and Sunday morning is not the place and time to experiment on attendance.

Sometimes in an act of desperation, pastors resort to making their churches glorified shows in order to attract more people, but sometimes meaningful, transformative worship that leads individuals to action is lost. Most individuals leave these services saying the same thing, “We had a good time.”

### **Members’ Expectations**

After experiencing praise from social media, tourist and friends, members sometimes allow the praise of others to stroke their egos, which makes members go into performance mode rather than worship mode in order to receive more accolades from visitors. It is easy to become trapped in the cycle of playing into what the people want, but members must remember that our primary purpose is to worship God.

Members must remember when visitors come into their worship space they are inviting others to experience God through their lens. However, instead, many churches change the lens to view what they feel their visitors want to see. It is important that we

remember that worship should be authentic to its culture; as well as, the God of the people.

In addition, congregants must not desecrate the worship heritage of their ancestors to fulfill the expectations of European visitors. The Black worship experience has never been a show; it was birthed out of oppression, struggle, hardship and anguish. The worship of the slaves is the bridge to 21<sup>st</sup> Century worship in the Black Church. The Black Church cannot allow the praises of their ancestors to be mistaken as just another good time by visitors and tourists.

The brunt of the work is not for the worship leader alone, but for the congregation as a whole. Sunday morning is not a “put on” but more of a “come on”.<sup>27</sup> In addition, I also would like for members to involve themselves with worship during the course of the week and not just Sunday morning. Some faith traditions call the individual conducting the worship service the liturgist which means, “the work of the people.”<sup>28</sup> Even by definition, the church must understand that everyone plays a vital role in making the worship service a life changing experience. This contemporary worship observation allows members to get their weekly fix, without them contributing anything to the worship. It is all about meeting their needs, desires and expectations.

While conversing with Dr. Obrey Hendricks, he said something that really resonated with me, “Frankco, there is a big difference in a congregation and an audience.” He noted that, “An audience comes to be entertained and to see a show from

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<sup>27</sup> “Put on” refers to individuals that perform a show for an audience and enjoys the attention one may receive. However, a “come on” refers to individuals coming together as a collective unit to promote one cause.

<sup>28</sup> John H. Miller, 1957, "The Nature and Definition of the Liturgy" *Theological Studies* 18, no. 3: 325-356, *ATLA Serials, Religion Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 7, 2013).

a performer; however, a congregation meets to worship corporately in anticipation of God bringing transformation in their lives.” This analogy is helpful in seeing that the church has a responsibility to worship as a community rather than individuals trying to get their own “piece of the pie”. It is a clarion call for everyone to be engaged and involved in the worship service; and not leaving it to the individuals on the stage with the microphone.

Dr. Hendricks notes in his book *The Universe Bends Toward Justice*, “Gospel music celebratory, performance orientation ideologically domesticated the social radicalism of Jesus’ message into a politically toothless, emotion charged entertainment genre, a phenomenon particularly evident in Black Churches today.”<sup>29</sup> Today, Gospel music has a mainstream audience and the ears of more listeners than ever before. The industry needs to send a responsible message that just does not elicit a “good time,” but a call to action. Hendricks further notes:

Once the black songs of Zion were heard only in the hush arbors and sequestered hearth-warmed quarters of clandestine slavery time: then in the soft, spare safety of those humming houses of refuge we called “church” . . . . Today Gospel music is featured daily by the most popular entertainment media in the land. . . . Yet despite the ubiquity of Gospel music today, barely a prophet’s voice doth grace the chorus; indeed the biblical prophet’s call for justice is nowhere to be found.<sup>30</sup>

We all have a responsibility to be involved and active in worship as we ascribe our value to Him. Worship is not a time for the congregation to become audiences waiting for something to happen to spark their interest, instead worship incorporates the entire congregation to wholeheartedly admire God in all His majesty and glory. I agree with

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<sup>29</sup> Obery M. Hendricks, *The Universe Bends Toward Justice: Radical Reflections on the Bible, the Church, and the Body Politic*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2011). Kindle edition.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Dr. Hendricks that Gospel music has gained the world, but it has lost the prophetic heart of black sacred music.

In addition, Black Churches cannot afford to allow the machine of the Gospel music industry to sabotage the rich diversity of worship music. The desire to hear the latest radio hit has sequestered the spirituals, anthems, hymns and classical music. John C. Banks says:

Shubert, Rossini, Beethoven and Brahms can work in church too! Moreover, the intricate and stylized spirituals of Hall Johnson, Nathaniel Dett, and William Dawson touched me as profoundly as an Andre Crouch or a Roberta Martin selection. This other style of worship is perceived by many blacks as “white” worship. Comments range from “Are we at the opera?” to “These are the bourgeoisie Negroes trying to be white”; such comments speak to the widening divide in the worship experiences of blacks.<sup>31</sup>

It is incumbent upon the 21<sup>st</sup> century Minister of Music in the Black Church to find a sense of balance in music presentation. If today’s youth don’t begin to embrace the hymns, anthems and spirituals of the church, many of these genres could soon be obsolete. However, these musical styles are being embraced by foreigners in large numbers. Even though gospel music is fun and has simple three part harmonies, the message in the music is taken for granted as members choreograph moves, riffs and outfits.

With the infiltration of Gospel music and its watered down message of “me, myself and I,” members focus more on themselves rather than the community at large. Ministers of Music cannot afford to allow Hollywood spectators, members and pastors to silence the music that brought African Americans over turmoil and persecution.

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<sup>31</sup> John C. Banks 2007. Black Church Music: An Essay on the "Other" Worship Experience of Black Mainline Protestants. *Journal of Religious Thought* 59/60, (1) (06): 161-164, <http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/222116112?accountid=10558> (accessed August 7, 2013).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **MINISTRY CONTEXT**

First Calvary Baptist Church (FCBC) is an urban church that sits in the Hamilton Heights section of Harlem, New York. Hamilton Heights is a section of Harlem that spans from the Hudson River to Edgecombe Avenue, from West 133rd Street to West 155th. It was named for Alexander Hamilton, whose clapboard-sided country house, Hamilton Grange, was recently moved a short distance to a prominent berth in St. Nicholas Park. The neighborhood's other claim to fame is the presence of City College and its more than 15,000 students, most of them commuters.<sup>1</sup>

First Calvary Baptist Church was founded by Southern blacks moving North during the great black migration. These were Southern blacks that came to the North in hopes of finding good jobs and a better quality of life. These moves did not only bring Southern lifestyles to the North but also brought its spirituality.

Although this church is located in the heart of New York City, it does not take visitors very long to hear and see that this church is steeped in Southern heritage. From the song selections, Southern analogies and aphorisms, food and stories, they all connect to the South. With more than 80% of the congregation having Southern roots, many people feel like they are at home.

First Calvary Baptist Church now celebrates 86 years of existence. The church has been fortunate in those 86 years to only have four pastors. These pastors have brought

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<sup>1</sup> C. J. Hughes, 2011 Hamilton Heights: Awaiting a Bounce. New York Times. June 2011. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/12/realestate/hamilton-heights-awaiting-a-bounce.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/12/realestate/hamilton-heights-awaiting-a-bounce.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed December 7, 2013).

somewhat of a blended worship style to the church due to their denominational backgrounds. Two of the four pastors had a strong Pentecostal affiliation that blends into the Baptist worship setting. The style of preaching and energy leads to some cross-pollinating of liturgies in the worship service.

The membership consists of 60-80 people attending weekly service; with a small fraction of those members commuting from the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn. The church was once in a rapid state of decline due to deaths and retirees moving to places of origin; however, now the church seems to be catching its bearings and growing at a marginal pace again.

Hamilton Heights is somewhat of a diverse neighborhood. Within the circumference of the church, it is not hard to notice Africans, Blacks and Hispanics. Nevertheless, Hispanics have a larger presence within the community with hair salons, taxi stands, restaurants, and tire shops sprinkled throughout the community. Blacks are the second largest group in the Hamilton Heights area.<sup>2</sup> It is also notable that fewer than 45% of residents within the Hamilton Heights area have less than a High School diploma.<sup>3</sup>

Harlem is now seeing a burst of new high rise condominiums and posh luxury apartments. This leaves many of the longtime residents of Harlem no other choice but to leave this rapidly gentrifying neighborhood. Hamilton Heights is now being overrun by bulldozers to build the latest pricey apartments. In addition, with Columbia University expanding their campus and building new properties in Manhattanville, which is next

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<sup>2</sup> City Data, "Hamilton Heights Statistics," <http://www.city-data.com/neighborhood/Hamilton-Heights-New-York-NY.html> (accessed July 4, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



door to Hamilton Heights, many of the residents of Hamilton Heights can expect to see a large influx of students and teachers flooding the neighborhood. Since 87% of Hamilton Heights residents have rent stabilized apartments at a median cost of \$827.00, it is not hard to understand that many of these residents will not be able to afford these swanky apartments.<sup>4</sup>

With the price of rents going up to accommodate the wealthier, educated, business suit clientele, many of the working-middle class, moderately educated blacks must find residence elsewhere. This is causing a mass exodus of African Americans in Harlem and this is being felt throughout the African American churches in the Harlem community. This has also put a financial strain on many of the churches in Harlem due to decreased giving in tithes and offerings.<sup>5</sup>

There is a high level of competition within the religious circles for new members; there are seven churches within a three block radius. Although these churches are of different faith traditions, there is still a high level of soliciting of services and programs for new members. This is very visible as flyers for different events blow through the streets, are placed on car windshields, and advertisements are placed in the local barbershops and restaurants.

With the new apartments that Columbia University is building in Manhattanville, Hamilton Heights is seeing an increase in Caucasians in the area. The cheap brownstones in this area have been quite attractive to many and they have found the prices to be inexpensive. Many of the students, teachers and faculty from the university have found

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Kia Gregory, 2013. As Tourists Come and Go, Harlem Churches Lose a 10% Lifeblood, *The New York Times*, May 24. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/25/nyregion/church-tithing-slips-in-harlem-even-as-neighborhood-improves.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/25/nyregion/church-tithing-slips-in-harlem-even-as-neighborhood-improves.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed July 4, 2013).

Hamilton Heights to be close and accessible to the university. Not only are students and faculty looking at Hamilton Heights, but developers are as well. Right now, this area is prime real estate as the prices begin to soar through the roof.

Nevertheless, if First Calvary Baptist Church wants to be a viable institution in this season of gentrification, First Calvary Baptist Church must evaluate its worship service and see where it fits within the context of the changing Hamilton Heights community. FCBC must ask, “Is our worship appealing to the community?” “Is our worship thought provoking and inspiring?” or “Is our worship service lackluster and dead?”

First Calvary Baptist Church is in an interesting predicament as it proceeds into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some of the challenges that First Calvary Baptist Church should investigate: 1) does the church need to maintain their Southern identity and heritage, or should worship services appeal to the new clientele and cultures coming into the Hamilton Heights area; 2) should the church appeal to and draw new members that are currently like the church; 3) or should First Calvary Baptist Church try to be a commuter church for people to come into to get away from their everyday communities? These are some of the questions that First Calvary Baptist Church must ask itself in order to do ministry seriously in this rapidly changing community.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

**God's Gift to Me**

My gift for music did not come from a music teacher, music books or a tutorial video. My musical ability was a gift from God. I was what the church would call “anointed”. I had a gift to play by ear. This gift found me while I was at my grandfather’s church, Free and Accepted Holiness Church (FAHC) in Montgomery, Alabama.

FAHC always hired the best musicians in town, so good music was always in great supply. But over time, good musicians stopped coming in and I found myself trying to fill in the gap, but I was not a good musician. I played every song in the key of “C,” I only knew two or three chords and I was horrible in making the chord changes on time.

I wanted to go to school for music, but finances did not permit that luxury. So I settled for sitting my chair next to the organist every week and soaking up every little bit that I could. I sat there looking at every finger, every chord and every body movement in hopes that their talent would fall on me.

David Haas notes:

I grew up in a musical family. Both of my parents were parish musicians, and as long as I can remember, I was sitting next to my dad on the organ bench, playing a make-believe organ on the kneeler top next to the organ console. Sunday was “church” day, and as a family we loved it, looked forward to it

and were nurtured by it, even though we never were forced or asked to articulate or reflect upon how and why.<sup>1</sup>

I can strongly identify with David's story. I also lived a life that was centered around church, and somehow along the journey, the church became a part of me. I grew fonder of music ministry, church, and the choir. I became a musician by association. It did not help much that everybody in my family played some type of instrument. So there was a great deal of influence from accomplished musicians within my family as well.

Whenever a musician would leave the church to pursue other endeavors, I somehow became the substitute musician. I had picked up enough from watching the musicians over the years that I could carry a decent church service. Until one day I waited with anticipation for the next musician to come and take my place and no one showed up. I understood at that moment that I was now the permanent musician. I did the best that I could do. My hands were anointed by my grandfather and he prophesied that I would play the piano all over the world.

### **Attending School**

While being the substitute musician at my grandfather's church, I was extended the opportunity to attend Carver Creative and Performing Arts (CCPAC) in Montgomery, Alabama. CCPAC was a very impressive and high performing arts school. It chose the best students in the city to be in the program. I was challenged while enrolled in the program.

I was also fortunate to have exceptional music teachers. The best piano teachers taught me every genre of music. I was able to grow as a musician and excel in the arts.

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<sup>1</sup> David Haas, *The Ministry and Mission of Sung Prayer* (Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press), 1.

While at CCPAC, I began to take my music career seriously and practiced and developed my gift.

Upon entering CCPAC, I was taught how to read music and sing. I felt that this was a great way to validate the gift that God had given me and expand my understanding. I had been playing and singing, but with my new found knowledge of music terminology and technical skill, I was doing even more than before in my performances. I was becoming more comfortable in my singing and playing and was making tremendous progress.

I have always believed that the anointing of God and education are a spectacular combination. God's gifting to perform a function and common knowledge about the function allows one to operate on a higher level of spirituality. There is nothing like performing at your peak capacity because you know what you are doing and giving God your very best. That is where a true worshipper should want to be.

I am always amazed at how God blessed me to be able to do something that most people found to be special. J. Wendell Mapson says:

Since some musicians possessed a special gift that gave them positions of importance within the community, particularly within the Black Church. Even the musician's ability to play by ear (to play the organ without the ability to read music) was seen by many as a special gift of the Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

Eventually my anointing and skill led me to be able to apply for a full scholarship to Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University. I explored the full gamut of music and received a Bachelor's and Master's in Music Education. God truly had a purpose and a plan for my life in leading me to this institution of higher learning. While matriculating at Alabama A&M University, I was nurtured by my teachers and grew in my musicality.

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<sup>2</sup> J. Wendell Mapson, Jr., *The Ministry of Music in the Black Church* (Pennsylvania: Judson Press), 65.

Everything that I was gifted by God musically and everything that I learned in school about music has been encapsulated into the man I am today. Every lesson I was taught, every gift that God bestowed upon me, I share in my musical presentations. I have been truly blessed to share with thousands of people something that is so dear to me- that gift of music.

### **Right Venue for the Anointed and Gifted**

I had finally merged my gift with my craft. I had been to school and validated my calling and ministry as a musician/minister of music. Needless to say, I did not foresee the opposition that would transpire from the people that I respected so much. I found myself fighting against pastors, members and churches that wanted “show choirs” rather than worshipers.

I went back to churches where pastors were more concerned about the final product rather than spiritual growth and skill of the choir. I finally had something to offer the church only to find that I was greeted with great opposition. This was very disappointing as I thought that I was on the right track, but I was far from it.

I knew that I was in trouble when the announcer would hype the church up weekly with her famous, “Are you ready for the choir? Under the direction of Min. Frankco Harris, receive the choir.” I despised that, because it made the choir into a center piece rather than a worship piece. I knew that God wanted more than entertainment and announcers calling the choir like a host on a late night T.V. show.

With the onslaught of gospel competitions and television shows like *Bobby Jones Gospel*, *Sunday Best*, *How Sweet the Sound*, and *the Most Powerful Voice Gospel Music Contest*, many believe that what they have paid admissions fees for in halls and arenas

should be reproduced by local church choirs. These are some of the things that have made churches into concert halls rather than worship centers. Worship has been replaced for complicated melodies and fancy songs and well-rehearsed showmanship.

Every Sunday I was bombarded by members who had attended these events or watched them at home and wanted to have the same experience every Sunday in worship service. I was questioned every week about why the church choir was not like the television choirs, or when would the choir and music sound like something heard on a compact disc or recording? No one ever truly embraced the unique sound and style of worship that had been created by the many individuals that had gathered for many years to prepare and present their music ministry in the sanctuary. Rather, many wanted to reproduce something that was either seen or heard elsewhere.

It was at this time that I desired to embrace authenticity and loose the desire to cater to many music departments' mimetic aspirations of generic church music. God is too vast and expansive to copy the styles of others and regurgitate it to members. I discerned that God wanted me to share His design to be unique and different with the world. In this regard, I have remained true to my calling and convictions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The Bible is replete with stories about God being displeased with the worship of His people. Whether Israel was worshipping a golden calf (Exodus 32:8), Moses' bronze serpent (I Kings 18:4), or the worship of Baal-Peor (Numbers 25:3), Israel held court for individuals that infuriated God with distasteful worship and practices. It is Israel that gives us a view of how to build both a positive and negative relationship with God. However, it is easy to refrain from encounters of displeasure with God if we learn from their powerful examples. Paul lets us know in I Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition..." It is from these stories of Israel that we are able to lift up what God expects from His people as it pertains to worship. It is through God's Word that the church is able to find valuable information, guidelines and examples for living. .

One of the best ways to learn from others is not to repeat their mistakes. It is through the examples in Israel's narrative that FCBC can learn valuable lessons. Not only does the story of Israel give good examples, but it allows others to see themselves in the narrative. Where have we as a people fallen short of the glory of



God? Where have we missed the mark? Where have we neglected God in our worship of Him?

It is through searching the scriptures that true reflection and contemplation about worship can be meditated on. In reality, Israel is not the only ones that messed up with God in their worship of Him, but all of humanity at some point has messed up.

For this cause, the author has picked three scriptures that lift up the various mistakes that Israel displayed within the Bible. These texts look at Israel's musical worship mistakes, idol worship mistakes, and mistakes as a worshiping community. It is the hope of this project that FCBC is able to learn what worship looks like, sounds like and feels like.

It is important that this project expresses the Biblical and theological view of worship so that FCBC will have concrete Biblical examples of what worship is. God is constantly revealing Himself to humanity, and part of the way that He does this is through the Word of God. God's Word is an excellent way for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Worshipers to stay connected to an eternal and everlasting God.

### **Amos 5: 21-27**

The book of Amos clearly shows that God can become extremely displeased with worship that is contaminated by self-glorification.

21-24 "I can't stand your religious meetings.  
I'm fed up with your conferences and conventions.  
I want nothing to do with your religion projects,  
your pretentious slogans and goals.  
I'm sick of your fund-raising schemes,  
your public relations and image making.

I've had all I can take of your noisy ego-music.  
 When was the last time you sang to *me*?  
 Do you know what I want?  
 I want justice—oceans of it.

I want fairness—rivers of it.  
 That's what I want. That's *all* I want.

<sup>25-27</sup> “Didn’t you, dear family of Israel, worship me faithfully for forty years in the wilderness, bringing the sacrifices and offerings I commanded? How is it you’ve stooped to dragging gimcrack statues of your so-called rulers around, hauling the cheap images of all your star-gods here and there? Since you like them so much, you can take them with you when I drive you into exile beyond Damascus.”(The Message)

When worship is filled with personal desires and a “good time,” God can become a little disturbed. God is concerned that worship is focused and centered on Him. Sometimes worship takes a left turn and veers far from God and gravitates to ourselves. He does not want to come to a worship service finding the members not worshipping Him.

God will not share His glory with anyone; including His creation. God, the creator, should never be disrespected by the creation. In the totality of worship, God has made it perfectly clear that He is the only one that should be addressed in our worship. In Exodus 20:3, God makes it clear that we should not have any other gods, before him.

Musicians should be mindful whose presence they have entered into while presenting at church. Due to the low remuneration musicians often receive musicians often double up on jobs. Some may play in a few clubs, bars and lounges at night and play for services on Sunday. However, musicians must remember that it is not advisable to mix the music from secular and sacred together. Both styles have their

place and when one is played in the wrong place, members can be taken out of a spiritual mind and placed into a secular mind.

Amos notes that Israel has decided to appease themselves rather than worshipping God. Israel found their substitution and replacement of worship to God extremely gratifying. It is dangerous to get caught up in musical skill and talents in order to feel affirmed by congregants. Although musicians attend schools to acquire the best training for their craft, everything that is taught in the class room is not applicable to worship service. I can recall being in music theory my freshman year of college and my college professor noted that certain modes and keys elicit certain types of behaviors. Music can be detrimental when left in the hands of musicians that have no regard for the church and the sanctity of the atmosphere.

Worship sends out a smell to God according to Amos 5:21. That smell can be either sweet or smelly, and whenever individuals promote their own fleshly desires, that smell can easily smell up the sanctuary. Many musicians in the Black Church display a high sense of self-glorification and pride as they play their favorite runs, play their favorite songs (even if they don't have sacred context) and disrupt worship for their own vain glory.

In Amos 5: 22, God clearly states that he will not accept those offerings. Whether musicians try to fill a void in their life, or to make someone smile in the audience as they send mixed signals to those that understand their coded secular musical interludes, God does not receive, accept or condone their musical presentation.

These actions by musicians have been more of a disruption in worship than a help. It perpetuates the “good time” behavior that many want in church. This type of music is divisive when it is brought into worship. I watch young people nod their heads and smile at each other while musicians play music that is inappropriate for worship. Meanwhile, elderly saints sit in the service totally oblivious to what is going on. This kind of music scatters the thoughts of members and carries them to another place other than worship. It is crucial that musicians make presentations that are pleasing to God. Musicians should not satisfy their musical thirst by being saturated in secular music alone. However, their musical presentation should be filled with life sustaining music that edifies the church and lifts spirits.

In addition, musicians and worship leaders must reevaluate what has been presented in Black worship services. Musicians and worship leaders must ask, “Is my presentation pleasing to God?” and “Does my worship send a foul odor to God and His congregants?” The self-indulging musical selections that can also be found in lounges and bars sometimes find primetime air play within the House of the Lord. This has created desensitized worshipers as they listen to songs in both secular and sacred venues without reservations.

Lack of preparation sometimes leads to inappropriate comments and selections. After having a week to prepare for worship, choir directors still walk over to the organist during service to ask, “What are we going to sing?” This pause usually stops worship for 3-4 minutes and creates a huge pause in the worship service. God deserves to be in the forethought of the musicians mind rather than an afterthought.

God deserves the best. Whatever one is presenting to God, it should be done in the spirit of excellence. God is constantly giving blessings and opportunities to his creation and there is an obligation to return the favor back to him. Humanity should never want or try to displease God with our presentations to Him.

### **I Chronicles 25: 7**

I Chronicles 25:7 allows the reader to infer that it was desirable to have a musician that was highly skilled.”

So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the Lord, even all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight (I Chronicles 25:7).

This Bible verse can be interpreted as an indication that some level of skill or training was required in order to achieve the title of musician. Little information is given in Biblical text about the level of training that musicians went through to become “cunning” musicians, however, these musicians were trained in this capacity to serve as musicians in the House of the Lord.

My grandfather use to say “Put some learning with your burning.” In other words, he was telling me that not only should I be passionate about what I do but I should also know something about what I do. This is a valuable lesson for musicians today. Music does not just make you feel good but music educates and informs. This is partly what should come out in our rehearsals and services.

One of the problems with music in the African American church is a lack of trained musicians. Finding musicians that can play by ear and read music is becoming more of a rare commodity as time goes along. With many churches picking

up the first musician that comes along in hopes that no one else picks him/her up leads to less quality. Dr. Ouida Harding notes, “Now, because there is a lack of apt leaders in music ministry, our congregations are not guided into worship from a perspective of recognizing that God is the one who directs worship as well the one to be worshipped. As a result there is ineffectiveness in the area of church music ministry.”<sup>2</sup>

Musicians should pursue music education in order to validate their call to music ministry. Music ministry will not be taken seriously until musicians take themselves seriously by increasing their skill set and attending school studying their craft and perfecting it. Many play music as a hobby and individuals treat them like a hobby by giving them dismissive honorariums and random acts of kindness when the musician provides an intricate component to the worship experience.

Nehemiah 13:1-10 tells of a priest by the name of Eliashib that took resources that were allotted for musicians, singers and priest and gave the room to Tobiah, an Ammonite governor that had no place in the chamber of the house of God. It is imperative that resources that are allotted to take care or sustain the music ministry team be left in place in order to maintain a high quality of worship within the church. Nehemiah comes from Jerusalem and reinstates the payments that were to be given to the musicians, singers and priest. The musicians had left the temple and began working in the fields. There was no music or singing in the temple, because there was no form of payment. The musicians had to find a way of living some kind of

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<sup>2</sup> Ouida Harding, *New Standards for Key Music Ministry Leadership Positions in the Black Baptist Churches of New York City* (Ontario, Canada: Guardian Books, 2013), 20.

way, so they resorted to growing their own food, which took them away from the house of God.

Everyone is not a minister of music. The term is used too loosely in African American churches. The minister of music is a title that should be given to individuals who feel that they have been called to the service of music ministry within the church. For many of the musicians that this title is bestowed upon, it is clearly a fallacy. Some have found churches to play at because they needed a little extra money for rent, car notes, or miscellaneous expenses. The needs of the church or its members are at the heart of the musician who is rendering services.

It is worth noting that musicians had multiple roles outside of their musical duties to fulfill in order to make sure that the temple ran smoothly. They were required to be flexible in order to meet the needs of the temple. One of the most disheartening things for many African American churches is the lack of available musicians to meet the heavy demand for musical services. There could be multiple services during the course of a month in the African American church that extend into the afternoon in order for other churches and fellowships to participate. However, with musicians that play for other services in the afternoon, or play for various denominations, this often causes problems.

Many musicians may be Seventh Day Adventist and cannot play at a Baptist Church's Saturday event if they are in their worship service. In addition, if this same musician is asked to share in a Friday night revival, he/she cannot participate due to observance of sunset before Sabbath. These are just a few of the issues that many churches face as they hire musicians from multiple faiths and ethnicities and cultures.

Although many churches may hire a full time musician, they also have a backup musician in order to keep a standby ready.

Some musicians request salaries that are not commensurate with their experience. Many musicians make a valid point about too much work for too little pay. Nevertheless, there is another side to this story as well. Many churches require a high level of demand for a low level of pay. Remuneration has been a discrepancy within the church for many years. For some churches, the service could last anywhere from 3-5 hours. In this case, for many churches, it is important that a musician is present because the majority of the service is music. With the infiltration of Gospel music, sight reading is not a strong point of many African American churches. In all honesty, hymn singing in church often lacks the richness of the harmony written by the composer due to rote teaching (teaching music by ear) of Gospel music that incorporates unison singing.

Listening to recordings of church singing in the 70's, it is easy to hear the richness of the various choral parts being sung at the same time. However, when the same listener fast forwards to church singing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a more monotone and unison sound is immediately noticeable. Youth have evaded learning the music of their ancestors like the plague, in order to embrace the hip-hop style of gospel music. Most of hip-hop urban style of music have unison, chant like melodies which require no musical aptitude. A whole music genre could be wiped out by the lack of interest. A historical music art form is not being embraced by youth.

There is a great need to preserve the legacy of the Black Church in order for it to survive and thrive in the next millennium. If Black Church attendance continues to



decline at the current rate, it is going to become extinct. This should not be the case for an institution that was so inspirational to so many people. Musicians must begin to teach lessons about the history of Black Church music and structure and form. Rehearsals can no longer be about teaching the latest songs off of the radio with no substance or relevance to the church; but through education, the church can preserve the history and legacy of Black Church music.

### **Acts 2:45-47**

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

In reading Acts 2:45-47, the reader is able to take a glimpse into a community that was changed and transformed by their worship of God and their fellowship with one another. The Acts community did not allow their service to God stop them from sharing in service to their fellow sisters and brothers. Rev. Samuel Rodriguez once said in his sermon on *The Lamb's Agenda*, that we lift our hands to God; we lower our hands to our fellow sister and brothers. He further noted that there is no real way we can worship God without worshipping with humankind.

In addition, their unity and oneness in worship brought them to a greater cause- helping each other. They sold their possessions so that no one in the community was in lack or need of anything. This is important for churches that worship in the community to reach out to the same community that they worship in.

The needs of the people must be addressed in order for them to see the validity of the churches in their community. It is when the church acknowledged the needs of the people that they saw exponential growth (Acts 2:47).

Just in briefly analyzing this text, one can see that the church of Acts did not change their order of worship to attract people. They fervently served the Lord and the community around them and in return God blessed them with supernatural growth.

This text proves that blessings are not just for the church, but the community as well. Our worship in church is just as important as our worship in community and abroad. It is imperative that we reach beyond the four walls of the church and rescue our brothers and sister that need our help. Not only will they feel the love of God, but they will experience God in a more personal way through the actions of the church.

When we share the love of God with one another, we bring individuals into the worship centers of our hearts. When we start worshiping in our communities, the community choir will sing and the community preachers will celebrate. When worship is extended beyond the four walls of the church that is when vertical worship with God becomes horizontal worship in community.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PROJECT MODEL**

While attending First Calvary Baptist Church, there have not been any workshops or classes offered other than Sunday School and Bible Study. Although these two classes are offered weekly, they are poorly attended by members. Furthermore, these classes tend to be teacher centered rather than member centered. There are very few venues where members can openly express their opinions and views as a sharing community (usually before and after church in small groups of whisperers). Beyond Christian Education, members need a venue where they can express their views and concerns in a non-intimidating environment.

The purpose of this project was to create a church-wide dialogue about worship with the congregants of FCBC. The goal of this project was to give members the vocabulary and jargon to express their theological views and ideas about worship in a clear and concise manner. By the end of the project, congregants were able to verbalize their various concepts and ideas of worship.

In addition, it was my goal to encourage the congregants of FCBC to make worship a part of their daily lifestyle, rather than just a Sunday morning experience. Worship cannot be encapsulated by what happens at church alone, rather, worship should be an extension of worship in the family, worship thorough finances and worship through

music. Worship should be in the forethought of congregants' minds throughout the course of their everyday lives.

When worship is relegated to Sunday morning, it becomes equivalent to a pain reliever. Individuals come to be alleviated of the pain and pressure that is induced by life, only to leave and feel the same pain that they so desperately left behind in worship. However, when worship becomes a part of one's lifestyle, worship becomes the answer to one's challenges. Embracing this mindset towards worship takes the responsibility off of the entertaining pastor and musicians and evokes a more worshipful experience for the congregation.

What happens when individuals use worship to anesthetize the pain and stress that they feel from life? Instead of facing the challenges that are presented in life, they may lean on worship and not do anything for themselves. Worship should never be the answer to alleviate pain and strain alone, but it should be the beginning of time" has change and resolve in one's life. Unfortunately, for many at FCBC, having "a good time" outweighed dealing with the personal issues and concerns the members are facing beyond the worship experience.

This project engaged the congregants of FCBC for two months of dialogue about worship. These workshops were held on Saturdays during the month of March and concluded with two worship services in April focused on the discussion topics in the workshops. . The project included: (1) a pre-test that asked questions about worship; (2) four Saturday workshops on worship in community, worship in church, worship in family and worship through finances; (3) a post-test was given to

gauge the level of influence that the workshops and discussions had on the congregants.

Upon entering the workshops, all participants were given a registration packet that included an agenda, pencil, pre-test and post-test, and a meal ticket. All of the workshops were started with prayer from various members of the Lay Advisory Committee and a selected scripture reading that pertained to the subject of the presentation.. This gave participants an opportunity to prepare their hearts and minds for the workshop.

After a welcome from a Lay Advisory Member, I explained the purpose of the workshop and the procedure we would follow. The participants were given 10-15 minutes to complete the pre-test. There was brief discussion of the questions asked in the pre-test followed by the workshop leader's presentation on the topic for the day. After the presentation, participants were provided a free lunch. During which everyone assembled into small groups to discuss the presenter's information. When the groups were finished, we reconvened for a question and answer session with the presenter and the workshop was closed.

The pretest was designed to assess members' prior knowledge of the material that was presented. All tests consisted of four open ended questions designed to encourage extensive responses. None of the questions pertained to specific issues of concern that were transpiring within the church. Mary Clark Moshella notes:

Formulating interview question is an important task in research design. Think about the tone you would like to set with your questions. A few open-ended questions that probe current practices and personal stories are

helpful for developmental puzzles. Try to design questions that are nonthreatening. Refrain from asking questions that are too pointed.<sup>1</sup>

It was the desire of the author to hear the true view of the participants without any hindrances or interferences. In the preparation of designing the open ended questions asked, preparation was made not to ask questions that pertained to specific issues that were transpiring within the church. Overall, the pretest was a good way of assessing prior knowledge and getting to know what the participant knew previously.

In *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations*, Mark Branson notes that:

Asking questions influences the group. No research is neutral or inconsequential; no consultant stays “outside” the organization. The research itself- interviewing people, using surveys, seeking opinions, and weighing votes- changes a church by influencing the thinking and conversations and images of participants. Memories, perceptions, and hopes are shared in the midst of research questions. Change, of one kind or another, begins with the very first questions.<sup>2</sup>

When questions were presented to First Calvary Baptist Church, members opened up and talked about various child rearing techniques that their parents incorporated, memories that they experienced as a child, and how the “extended family” within the church helped them to explore their relationship with Christ. This was a time of great sharing and reflection by members of the church and the presenters. Dr. Simpson noted in a debriefing that, “Maybe the church members were their own experts. The participants are teachers in their own right, and they have a great sense of expertise because of their life experiences.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, Ohio Pilgrim Press, 2008), 66-67.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Virginia: Alban Institute, 2004), 25.

<sup>3</sup> Reflection points given by Dr. Gary Simpson on May 14, 2013 at Concord Baptist Church, Brooklyn, New York.

That is why great detail and consideration went into who would be the workshop presenters. The author did not secure the nearest speaker that could be found; however, the author found speakers that would help both the church and the individuals that were in attendance. Speakers were acquired that had great expertise in the area that they were speaking on. The members greatly appreciated this new voice in their community of believers.

This project incorporated four workshop speakers along with the assistance of the Lay Advisory Committee to administer pre-test and post-test. In addition, the lay advisory committee will meet periodically to assess the progress of the project and to see where growth and development is taking place. The lay advisory group will also be the base discussion group for how workshops can be improved and enhanced. At the request of the chairman on the Lay Advisory Committee, the Lay Advisory Committee agreed to bring refreshments and snacks for the participants.

### **Workshops**

In order to create a warm welcoming environment, the author decided to bring in speakers that would best relate to FCBC. Information taken from ethnographic research notes showed that members detested individuals that they felt were “grand standing.”<sup>4</sup> Whenever members shared comments in Sunday school or Bible Study, many felt that individuals that used “big words” thought that they were better than them and looked down on them as individuals.

However, this did not stop the pursuit to help FCBC to gain a better understanding of worship through educational tools and analysis. The author

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<sup>4</sup> “Grand standing” is a demeanor of individuals that act as if they are superior to others.

constructed a curriculum that would allow members to dialogue; as well as, arrange their own ideologies about worship through writing.

It is for this cause that much of the language used to engage the members of FCBC was very user friendly and common to their vernacular. Although there were some technical terms applied in order to stimulate dialogue amongst congregants. Paul notes in I Corinthians 9:19-23 that we must be wise in how we present our messages to individuals. It is best that we make our message smooth and palatable so that the listeners can digest the material. Whenever trying to reach men/women for Christ, we must be wise in our approach and delivery. The brunt of the work is not for the worship leader alone, but for the congregation as a whole.

### **Worship in the Family**

This workshop was started with a pretest to assess the worshipers prior know of worship within the family. It also was a time that many of the worshippers could share their own family worship regimens. Once the pretest was completed, many of the participants shared their answers with the rest of the group. This also was helpful to augment portions or ideas that were not covered by the presenter. It gave the participants a time to share amongst each other.

Many years ago I met Rev. Logan when he was the youth pastor at Convent Avenue Baptist Church. His ability to teach relatable, thought provoking messages was incredible. Every week I was able to experience the message that God had given to him in so many unique ways. I noticed his special relationship with his children



and his wife that transcended beyond church walls and immediately reached out to him to teach this class on *Worship in the Family*.

Rev. James Logan facilitated the workshop on *Worship in the Family*. Rev. Logan is pastor of Messiah Baptist Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut and is a Doctoral Candidate at Dallas Theological Seminary pursuing a degree in Marriage and Family Counseling. He is a wonderful family man that encourages family worship as a daily practice in the home.

Rev. Logan is a strong advocate for families and believes in the sanctity of the family unit. He practices family worship within his family and shared a few practical points that he uses in his family worship practices. These tips were very useful to members in the congregation and were appreciative of the warm and caring advice that Rev. Logan shared with the membership.

Rev. Logan expressed how important prayer is in the family. He encouraged FCBC not only pray in the church, but to pray for our families and our children. It was noted that things that are important to us should be prayed for often. The desire for our families and children to do well should always be on the forethought of our minds. These prayers help to strengthen the family and keep members of the family focused on goals and aspirations. Families should be constantly striving towards perfection as a family unit in the plan of God.

He also noted that it is important to build traditions and rituals into our daily lives. Through prayers and scripture readings, families can build themes and traditions out of family unity. When a family strengthens them through prayer and the Word of God, it can be hard for adversity and trials to separate them. This

encourages children and family members to practice a healthy spiritual regimen in good times, as well as, bad times.

The facilitator suggested that scripture reading and memorization should be a part of the family worship. Rev. Logan quoted Psalm 119:11, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee,” and made us aware that the word should be a part of our family foundation. Every family should have scriptures that speak to the goal and plan of the family unit in order to bring inspiration and clarity to the family unit. In addition, memorization makes way to meditate on scripture without using the Bible. It can make individuals more reflective in their daily activities.

Family has been a very important entity in the Black Church. J. Deotis Roberts notes in his book, *Roots of a Black Future*, that “Traditionally the Black Church has been an extended family and the family has been a “domestic church.” At the center of this affirmation is the Biblical image of the church as the family of God.”<sup>6</sup> Much needs to be said about the extension of church families and immediate families. Family groups have been a large percentage of the churches’ memberships since its inception as a community institution. Some family groups are such large financial contributors that pastors accommodate families’ wishes in order to offset upheavals or disturbances within the church.

One of the most helpful attributes of the Black Church was its ability to fill in the gaps that were missing in the home. Everyone in the church played various roles for missing members of immediate families and played the roles in the church. This is why many of the members were called mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers. This

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<sup>6</sup> J. Deotis Roberts, *Roots of a Black Future: Family and Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), Kindle edition.

allowed for many to grow up and not even know that people were missing within their immediate families. Blassingame notes, “Evidence of this tie between religion and family in his study of the slave community. The strong sense of family and community solidarity is indicated by frequent references to relatives and friends by name. Because the church served as the maker social center in the quarters there are numerous references to “going to the meeting.”<sup>7</sup>

The Black Church had a beautiful way of connecting individuals into this larger family. Roberts notes, “In the black community the family is not always limited by blood relationships. There is an informal adoption of children, and economic factors often bring people together who assume symbolic kinship that may be rooted in deep affection.”<sup>8</sup> For many, the lines of church and family are used interchangeably. This has often become so blurred in the church; you might not know who actually is blood family is and who is church family.

### **Worship in the Church**

Rev. Keith Bolden conducted the workshop on Worship in the Church. He had several points about worship that were taken into consideration. Rev. Bolden noted that anytime we worship we are giving God value. He let us know that anytime we put other things in priority over God, we have created an idol God. He said that God will have no other God’s beside Him, because He is a jealous God that will not share His glory.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Rev. Bolden talked with the forum for thirty minutes and gave a question and answer segment that went well into 3:00 in the afternoon. He was well received and was a blessing to the church and the attendees. Rev. Bolden heightened the awareness of the members about why they worship and why worship is important.

In order to expand his points and views on worship, Rev. Bolden conducted a series of sermons over the next three months that were all dedicated to the thought process of worship. He attempted to encourage each of us to compose a view on worship and make it a part of our daily routine and regimen. He encouraged morning prayers, scripture reading, fasting, and reflection as ways for the church to grow a stronger more spiritual worship practice.

It is also important to note that worship must take on a Biblical and theological reference if it is to be grounded spiritually. If there is no Biblical point of reference for worship then it is no more than a “community sing-along”. It is the Word of God that brings transformation and life to the believer and the community. Nothing will change until we are changed. Romans 12:2 says, “ And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

When we are changed by God through the unction of the Holy Spirit we then live a regenerated life that is a source of hope and inspiration for the world. Gayraud Wilmore shares, “Black Church clergy are charged with helping the congregation to discover how preaching and prayer, music and worship are all informed by biblical

and theological knowledge and directed toward the fundamental transformation of persons and institution of society.”<sup>9</sup>

The church has many functions, and has served as a place to meet the needs of the community. The Black Church has always been a staple in the community of African Americans. The church has been recognized as a home base for many functions and causes. Many understood that if anything happened in the community, just go over to the church. Mapson notes that:

The Black Church has not only served a religious function but has been an all-purpose institution, providing social as well as spiritual services....From it came self-help organizations, resources for extended families, educational opportunities, and political organization. It provided a place for the free display of talent and potential that could not be utilized and appreciated in America’s marketplace. Those who were powerless had access to power within the Black Church.<sup>10</sup>

However, FCBC has struggled to make a strong religious presence in the community. The needs of the church are so pronounced that there is no room to do evangelism. The financial, vocational and social needs of the members outweigh any need that can be addressed within the community. The ability for FCBC to be an institutional gathering place has been hindered by its current financial state. It is hard the church to do ministry when the church has immediate needs itself.

Within this community, the FCBC could be a great asset in helping develop GED programs, financial education courses, and family intervention programs. These are all immediate needs within the Hamilton Heights community, but many of the

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<sup>9</sup> Barnes, Sandra L. 2005. “Black Church Culture and Community Action,” *Social Forces* 84, (2) (12): 967-994, <http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/229859353?accountid=10558> (accessed August 9, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Mapson, J. Wendell, *The Ministry of Music in the Black Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1984), 19.

churches in this area are struggling to survive; which stalls possible community outreach and intervention programs.

As more non-profit programs have become available in the communities, the Black Church struggles to find a new identity in twenty first century ministry. There is a great level of competition to differentiate programs being offered in the same community by churches and non-profits. In order for the Black Church to survive, it should not just offer free food and clothes, but look at empowering the whole personhood of humankind.

Many are becoming disengaged from the church and not participating in the many aspects of the Black Church experience. Many have become disgruntled with how churches are being run by failed leadership, and ethical, moral depravity in the Black Church. One of the biggest fallacies in design of worship services is that youth are looking for high energy, over amplified worship. The reality is youth desire to worship in warm authentic settings. Often what churches are presenting to youth is not what youth are really looking for. Christian Smith notes in her book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*:

“Contemporary teenagers are almost entirely bought into the mainstream system, anxious to succeed on the system’s terms, and well socialized to want to enjoy the consumerist and experiential benefits of U.S. society as much as they are able. Most teens appreciate their relationships with adults and most of those who lack them wish they had such ties. Moreover, the traditional “storm and stress” model of adolescence accurately depicts only a minority of teens and, in our view is a counterproductive lens through which adults in faith communities (and beyond) view youth.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Christian Smith, and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Kindle 270-271.

There is so much more to worship than three songs, a sermon and a call to discipleship. Views on worship must be expanded in order to speak to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century church. The church should visibly interact in worship with humankind. It is not enough to come in the church to have a “good time” but our worship should lead us to action. Through the move of the Holy Spirit, we must adhere to the call of helping those that are less fortunate and struggle with everyday life.

### **Worship through Music**

The workshop on *Worship through Music* was conducted by Rev. Frankco Harris. Rev. Harris is Minister of Music of First Calvary Baptist Church and is an accomplished singer and presenter. Rev. Harris has an extensive background in both music education and religious education. He also has toured overseas with many Gospel groups and artists.

Rev. Harris addressed some of the issues of concern that he has encountered while ministering to First Calvary Baptist Church. One of the things that he acknowledged was how members did not take the devotion period of the service seriously. Rev. Harris noted that many people walk, talk, pass messages, drink and conduct business during the devotional period. Rev. Harris pointed out that devotion is a call to worship. It is a point in the service where we engage God as a community of believers and separate ourselves from our worldly encounters.

Since Rev. Harris is also a member of First Calvary Baptist Church, he had a firsthand knowledge of the inner workings of the church. He was privileged to know

what is going on within the music department in order to address some of the issues at hand.

Rev. Harris desired to add a level of depth and meaning to the First Calvary Baptist Church choirs. Harris addressed the many issues of concern that he has for First Calvary Baptist Church and its music ministry. In sharing the history of the moans and groans of the slaves to the hand clapping, foot stomping in the store front churches of the South; these experiences helped shape the landscape of music in the Black Church.

He also noted that in order for First Calvary Baptist Church to do effective and meaningful music ministry the music should be theologically and scripturally sound. The messages that were placed within the spirituals, hymns and anthems are easily traced back to the Bible. Sandra Barnes states, “Black religious music forms evolved from scripture.”<sup>12</sup>

The church cannot afford to bring music into the church that has no substance or true meaning. These songs must embrace and lift up the message of the Bible in order to bring hope to a dying generation. Bringing music to the church that has a catchy beat and smooth melody is not enough to sustain members and give them a permanent connection with the church.

Dr. Ouida Harding explained the difference between “Performance” and “Presentation” in a workshop presented at New York Theological Seminary. Dr. Harding placed these two words over each other and circled the letters *for man* in the word performance and *present* in the word presentation. She let the attendees know

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<sup>12</sup> Sandra L. Barnes 2005. “Black Church Culture and Community Action,” *Social Forces* 84, (2) (12): 967-994, <http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/229859353?accountid=10558> (accessed August 9, 2013).



that sometimes worship leaders put on performances, because they do it *for man*. Musicians sometimes look for praise and accolades from the congregation. In these situations God does not get the glory. On the other hand, when musicians make a presentation, they *present* their gift to God and release themselves from the pleasure of the praise of the congregation.<sup>13</sup>

The author addressed the issue of congregants not participating in devotion when the worship service begins, noting that many treat the devotional period as a preliminary event to the worship service. Rev. Harris further noted that all of the service is an integral part of the worship experience. No part of the service should be taken as more important than the other. Some members wait until the choir marches in during the processional before they fully engage themselves in worship. Harris believes that however you start something is the same way you should end it. The ‘worthiness’ of God should be taken seriously at the beginning of worship as well as the end.

Music should inspire an individual to action. The music of the church should never be so lack luster that it does not move members to change themselves and the world. In I Samuel 10:11, the prophets are amazed at the dramatic transformation of Saul since he had not taken any of the prophetic courses. They ask, “Is Saul among the prophets?” The thing that gave Saul this prophetic gift was inspirational music. The musician must always remember that there is an ability to place a spirit of worship, or confusion, in the atmosphere at all times during worship.

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<sup>13</sup> Presentation by Dr. Ouida Harding on *Worship in the Black Church* at New York Theological Seminary on July 27, 2013.

The musicians that are assigned to Saul for his prophetic inspiration stay on course until their assignment is complete. There is always someone that needs a blessing through the gift of music. Music is needed to heal and deliver individuals from their proclivities and indiscretions. This is what happened in I Samuel 16:23 when David provided anointed music to take an evil spirit off of King Saul. David played a song that allowed the King to receive some relief from the struggles of his overwhelming life. Church musicians must do the same as they help the members enter into worship and release the evil spirit of their own lives.

On another note, I have noticed that there is an unhealthy competitive spirit between the choirs. Although all the choirs sing about Jesus, some choirs desire to do it better than the others. This has created a wedge between many of the members because they do not care to be involved. I have tried to talk with members about their not coming together, but I am aware that the story is deeper than what I have been told and no one cares to repeat it. When I ask about the choirs coming together I am told that, "The young people don't want to sing with the elderly members."

God is not concerned about who sings better, or who has a more youthful sound, but He is concerned about worshiping Him from a pure heart. It is the desire of these workshops to have members reevaluate what they are doing, and make sure they are ministering for the right reason. The tune from your voice could be melodious, but the tune from your heart could be flat.

## Unexpected Outcomes

There were a few unexpected glitches in the implementation of this project. Due to inclement weather, the workshop on “Worship through Finances” was cancelled and could not be rescheduled with the presenter. This workshop was extended to the entire congregation to give sound, sage financial advice for many of the members that live on fixed incomes, and limited financial resources.

The cancellation of this workshop may have had a great effect on the long-term impact of the project since many of the members have mild to severe financial restraints. Financial literacy is an issue that needs to be addressed at First Calvary Baptist Church today. Anytime the subject of money comes up in church, immediately the church becomes enraged. Some feel as if they are being targeted and should not be asked for any contribution to the church. Issues related to money are often avoided and the church is suffering severely for this reason. I am hoping to present this workshop in the future in order to create a healthy atmosphere about money within the church.

Studying the statistics within the Hamilton Heights community shows that this workshop could have been very beneficial to the worship life of First Calvary Baptist Church. It is the author’s desire to conduct this workshop at a later date in order to bring in a voice that can bring liberation and clarity to worshipping through finances. When men and women can worship God without reservation or hindrance it makes for a more meaningful experience.

Another suggestion was to have workshops throughout the year for the members to address other areas of concern such as conflict resolution, finances, and

family issues. These were all ideas that were expressed during the workshops that were presented during March. The membership enjoyed these opportunities to discuss their concerns with each other.

One of the interesting things about the workshops is they all went beyond their scheduled time due to individuals who desired to share their own personal stories and scenarios about each topic. Although each workshop was designed for an hour and a half, many of the workshops extended into three hour intervals. Each clinician was well within their time frames and did an excellent job of staying on target; however, when the question and answer segment started, the workshop began to take on a life of its own as people addressed additional issues that they were facing.

This brought an awareness that the members of FCBC needed to have some dialogue time outside the parameters of Sunday worship. Sunday worship is a wonderful time for worshipers to greet and meet with individuals who they have not been seen in days, yet, it is not enough time to catch up on everyday occurrences that have transpired in everyone's life. FCBC needs to find time that they can sit down with one another and hear each other's stories.

I learned about "active listening"<sup>15</sup> during this time as well, because I was no longer the individual with the "answers" for the people, but I was the individual with an "ear" for the people. It is extremely important to listen to the issues and concerns that individuals may have in order to help them have some closure and resolve. Mary Clark Moschella notes in her book *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice* that, "Listening is an act of love. Listening is that crucial act of love for which human

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<sup>15</sup> Active listening is terminology that I picked up at South Nassau Community Hospital. Active listeners are assigned to sit with and listen to patient's stories and concerns.

beings long. With careful listening can come the gifts of being heard, known, and understood.”<sup>16</sup>

As a result of listening to FCBC story I, in turn, learned more about myself and what I needed to evaluate in my worship life.<sup>17</sup> FCBC narrative helped me to see that not only was the understanding of worship misinformed for them, but upon careful analysis I found my own definition of worship to be somewhat lackluster.

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<sup>16</sup> Moschella, Mary Clark. *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 254.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 160. *In Sun* a woman experienced deeper meanings in her own life as a result of her deep story listening and heartfelt appreciation for research participants.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

This project has inspired the members of First Calvary Baptist Church. They have seen that by working together as a unified body, they can accomplish their goals. The church has learned what meaningful and purposeful planning can do in the life of First Calvary Baptist Church. I was approached by the pastor to continue a series of workshops on various topics throughout the year due to the overwhelming response. There is a thirst for education at First Calvary Baptist Church and a need to grow both spiritually and educationally.

Many of the events and services that are attempted by the church are thwarted by poor planning and weak administration. However, with the Lay Advisory Committee and the members working together over this long period of time, the members were able to see that good things come to those who plan and follow through.

The future of this great church looks very bright and I am confident that First Calvary will do even greater things in its future. The setbacks have been large but the reward will be even greater. It is for this cause that we celebrate the life, love and legacy of the First Calvary Baptist Church.

Members of the Lay Advisory Committee were excited to express futuristic implications for First Calvary Baptist Church. The level of enthusiasm after this project has been extremely contagious. There are many ideas and concepts that were talked about and discussed during the Site Visit with Dr. Gary Simpson. Members have found a way to not only talk about First Calvary Baptist Church, but have a strong desire to make FCBC a better place.

Somehow the time spent getting to know each other and discussing various issues of concern in our initial meeting stimulated dialogue between members. Due to the hectic schedules of many members, it is hard to find time to engage in dialogue outside the auspices of Sunday worship. This project has prompted many of the members to re-engage each other and spend quality time with one another outside the four walls of the church. There is a communal and relational component that has been neglected in FCBC that seems to be rekindling. Having many commuter members and members coming from various social locations has had a toll on the congregational life of the church.

Some other things members want to do consist of making information cards that explain the church history and worship services. This will allow first time visitors that are coming into the church to understand the rich history of First Calvary Baptist Church and decide if they would like to be a part of the church. The Lay Advisory Committee also wants to make these cards in various foreign languages to disseminate to visitors from other countries, not to play into the “Hollywood Expectations” mentioned earlier, but rather to allow visitors to have a real understanding of the people of First Calvary Baptist Church. Perhaps this will

diminish the expectation of a “Hollywood Good Time” experience from the congregation. The ideas and suggestions that I see some visitors impose on congregations are offensive, rude and disrespectful to the congregation and their faith tradition.

Furthermore, information cards can provide a means of informing the community about First Calvary Church. It is important for the community to know about the ministries and services of the church and what role the church has played within the community. Such information could attract the attention of individuals moving into the area that are seeking a place to worship.

Another suggestion was for the church to have workshops to engage the youth of the church. In these workshops youth would have an opportunity to discuss issues of concern that they might have in the community, school, and church. It is also an opportunity for youth in the church to reach out to community youth in the area to address some of their needs.

### **First Calvary in the Immediate Future**

The author foresees First Calvary Baptist Church as a brand new church with in a brand new renovated building. Even though the renovation on this building has lagged for more than 18 years, the minds and spirits of the membership of FCBC must first be renovated before they enter into a new building. Moreover, if FCBC receives a new building at this present time, they will only bring old baggage into the new edifice. That is why Romans 12:2 says “...be ye transformed by the renewing of



your mind...,” because at some point you have to move beyond your past experiences and celebrate where you are and where you are going.

I can imagine how the Children of Israel felt when they saw the temple being completed for the second time in Ezra 3:12-13. It was hard to differentiate who was crying for the old temple and who was rejoicing for the new temple in all the noise. The text in Ezra 3:12-13 says, “But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.” Some were feeling as if they would never see it in their lifetime, some being impressed by seeing it for the first time, and others were remembering those who made sacrifices that never saw it completed.

I can hear the same noise in my prophetic imagination for First Calvary Baptist Church. There would be some that are crying for the old First Calvary Baptist Church, while there would be many rejoicing for what they see in the new. Yet, in the midst of this great commotion stands a new future, a new opportunity and a new beginning in the life of an 86 year old ministry. God has a unique way of making us new even when we become gifted with age.

### **First Calvary in a Distant Future**

FCBC is in need of healing from its past hurts and present challenges. For many years, the church has been dealing with separation anxiety issues from the

abrupt departure of its former pastor. In addition, the lack of a seamless transition also threw the homeostasis of the church off. Edwin Freidman explains homeostasis in his book *Generation to Generation*:

A key to that relocation is the concept of homeostasis: the tendency of any set of relationships to strive perpetually, in self-corrective ways, to preserve the organizing principles of its existence. Family theory assumes that no matter what the various members' quirks or idiosyncrasies, if the system exists and has a name, it had to have achieved some kind of balance in order to permit the continuity necessary for maintaining its identity.<sup>1</sup>

Five years into new leadership, FCBC has not regained its homeostasis and continues to struggle for balance. This is partially due to many of the members not releasing their hurt over their former pastor leaving FCBC to pastor another church. This has caused some hardships for the current pastor and his administration. As he tries to implement new ideas and policies, he is often confronted with opposition that has caused tension between pastor and congregation.

In turn, it seems that both the pastor and the church are holding on until something better comes along. Ministry is not at the forefront of the church. Both church and pastor must come together in a collective effort for the good of the church and the community. Change will not occur until individuals move their agendas to the side and allow God to be glorified.

On the other hand, "in fighting" is not a bad thing within a congregation. Sometimes dissension within churches causes congregations to come together and galvanize their force to work for the greater good of the church. Branson states, "It is important to value differences. It is likely that participants will always agree on what

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<sup>1</sup> Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985), Kindle edition.

is best for the group. When an organization surfaces various narratives and works together interpreting the data, everyone gains if mutual respect and attentiveness is the norm.”<sup>2</sup> At some point, the FCBC must agree to disagree. There are no right or wrong answers, but the congregation must begin to look for the best possible solution for the church to operate amicably.

The author is fully aware that change occurs over a period of time. It is important to note that the past and present must be embraced together. According to Branson, “People have more confidence in the journey to the future when they carry parts of the past. The unknown easily creates fears. When an organization approaches change by talking about everything that is wrong and all of the innovations that are to be adopted, participations create direct links with the organization’s best and most appreciated narratives.”<sup>3</sup>

Just as medicine remains in one’s system until it is disseminated through the body; members of FCBC are also aware that patterns of behavior persist until the behavior is alleviated from one’s system. For the most part, “good time” worship is still in the system of FCBC, but through educational programming workshops, this pattern of behavior can be curtailed. It is through diligence and persistence in worship education that this systemic behavior of having a “good time” can be decimated. When thorough, thought provoking education is presented, members will be given something to think about before they participate in worship.

The real beauty about having worship education classes is that members will have a base of knowledge to pull from to express what is transpiring within the

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations* (Herndon: Alban Institute, 2004), 27.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 25.

worship experience. Worship could be so much more meaningful than a good time when it can be verbalized and articulated as to what is transpiring within the worship experience.

This project was a wonderful opportunity for FCBC to bond, dialogue, and see each other's humanity. As we talked in workshops and events, FCBC learned to work through personal differences and tension. FCBC learned that only by working together could they achieve their goals and aspirations. This project was motivational to the congregational life of FCBC. Branson shares that, "All steps are collaborative. Every phase requires wide participation- interviews, interpretation, visioning, and embedding changes. This requires congregation-wide discourse."<sup>4</sup> It is through the entire congregation of FCBC, that the members can learn more about who they are and what their place is in the world.

As I look at this project in its totality, I can truly say that I have been both challenged and blessed. I was challenged with the great task of gathering and interpreting information from First Calvary Baptist Church in Harlem, New York. I learned to love people in their environment on their terms and I was made better. I must agree with Mary Clark Moschella when she said, "Listening to the congregation or group as a whole is also an act of love."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 254.

## **APPENDIX A –**

### **WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH**

First Calvary Baptist Church Lay Advisory Committee

Rev. Frankco Harris- Coordinator

Saturday, February 2, 2013

#### **Worship in the Church: Workshop Agenda**

Presenter- Pastor Keith A. Bolden

- Pray
- Scripture
- Welcome
- Purpose of Workshop
- Pre- Assessment
- Presentation- Worship in the Church by Rev. Keith A. Bolden
- Small Group Discussions
- Exit Review Test
- Q&A Session
- Closing Remarks

#### **Lay Advisory Committee Members**

Deacon Benjamin Lamb

Deacon Joe Deas

Deacon Farris Rice

Sis. Nancy Johnson

Sis. Cynthia West

Sis. Ophelia Etheridge

Sis. Bertha Wilson



## **APPENDIX B**

### WORSHIP IN THE COMMUNITY

First Calvary Baptist Church Lay Advisory Committee

Rev. Frankco Harris- Coordinator

Saturday, February 16, 2013

#### **Worship in the Community: Workshop Agenda:**

Presenter- Rev. Kelvin Walter

- Pray
- Scripture
- Welcome
- Purpose of Workshop
- Pre- Assessment
- Presentation- Worship in the Community by Rev. Kelvin Walter
- Small Group Discussions
- Exit Review Test
- Q&A Session
- Closing Remarks

#### **Lay Advisory Committee Members**

Deacon Benjamin Lamb

Deacon Joe Deas

Deacon Farris Rice

Sis. Nancy Johnson

Sis. Cynthia West

Sis. Ophelia Etheridge

Sis. Bertha Wilson





## **APPENDIX C**

### **WORSHIP IN THE FAMILY**

First Calvary Baptist Church Lay Advisory Committee

Rev. Frankco Harris- Coordinator

Saturday, February 23, 2013

#### **Worship in the Family: Workshop Agenda**

Presenter- Rev. James Logan

- Pray
- Scripture
- Welcome
- Purpose of Workshop
- Pre- Assessment
- Presentation- Worship in the Family
- Small Group Discussions
- Exit Review Test
- Q&A Session
- Closing Remarks

#### **Lay Advisory Committee Members**

Deacon Benjamin Lamb

Deacon Joe Deas

Deacon Farris Rice

Sis. Nancy Johnson

Sis. Cynthia West

Sis. Ophelia Etheridge

Sis. Bertha Wilson

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Worship in the Family Workshop: Pre-Assessment**

1. How does your family implement worship within its weekly or daily routines?
2. Why is worship in the family important?
3. What does worship in your family look like?
4. What has worship done for your family both extended and immediate?

Exit Ticket

Name a family that motivated you to worship as a family and why?

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