

VOICES OF FAITH HISTORY

My Goals for the Choir

Psalm 69:30 says, "I will praise the name of God with song, and magnify Him with thanksgiving."

- First and foremost, To Praise the Lord through Music!
- To sing for worship services at PCUMC.
- To have a mass choir of about 80 to 100 voices. (Similar to the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir)
- To consistently rehearse **weekly** to learn new music, and to have fun while doing it.
- To involve the entire community, and to participate in community events.
- To be diverse, above all else.

Although we do use sheet music on occasion, I wanted to train a new music "muscle" in the vein of call and response spirituals. I wanted to strengthen our ear training. Many of us were so used to holding the written music out in front. I wanted to teach learning music by singing, listening, repeating, and memorization. Also, rhythm was an important part of the early spirituals, and rhythm is integral to present day gospel music. I wanted to teach the choir to use their bodies, rhythmically. Movement is important.

Our first rehearsal was on a Monday evening in the beginning of 2018. We brainstormed for choir names, and voted on the Voices of Faith, (VOF). We immediately elected choir officers, and BJ Jones was elected president, and has faithfully served in that capacity since day one. BJ was instrumental in getting the choir T-shirts made with our choir logo on them. The Voices of Faith logo was designed by our choir member, Pearl Jones. I believe we sang for the first time on April 29, 2018, for morning worship. The VOF has ministered on every fifth Sunday since then, also singing for special services such as Holy Thursday and Thanksgiving.

VOF has utilized many different musical instruments including drums, keyboard and piano, bass and lead guitar, saxophone, tambourines, wood blocks, and other percussion instruments. Joe Hamilton has been our steady musician on bass guitar from day one.

Before Covid hit, we were up to about 60 members. Things that I am most proud of was that we were racially diverse, we had both church and community participants, and our age range, at the time, spanned from age ten to "eighty-something years old seasoned saints." I "retired" during Covid, but, praise the Lord, VOF kept on ministering, nonstop, thanks to Tawn Thomas, Joe Hamilton, various musicians, BJ and Marva Jones, and all of the other officers and members.

Singing in the Community

- Juneteenth Celebration at the African American Cultural Society.
- Senior care facilities, notably for choir member Evelyn Keller's mother-in-law's birthday celebration, and for our beloved deceased member, Jayne Ober. I will never forget Jane, singing along with such joy, and telling me how much she "loved this music."
- One of the highlights for me was participating in the Concert Series concerts with renowned musician, Renese King, singing a tribute to Aretha Franklin one year, and singing a rendition of Renese King's "Lift Every Voice and Sing" another year."

With God's help, the Voices of Faith will continue to minister through song!

Psalm 104:33 "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to God while I have my being."