

*Celebrating Our 92nd
Production of*

Heaven Bound

***Jory J. Young,
Director***

*Nathaniel Fisher, Jr.
Minister of Worship & Arts*

BIG BETHELAME CHURCH

220 AUBURN AVENUE, NE
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303

www.bigbethelame.org

Rev. John Foster, Ph.D., Senior Pastor

November 8 & 9, 2024 7:00PM



ATTENTION:
NO RECORDING OR
FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY
ALLOWED!!



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FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY
ALLOWED!!

TO OUR MANY FRIENDS AND FAMILIES WHO HAVE
 SUPPORTED OUR HEAVEN BOUND PRODUCTION!

Thank You

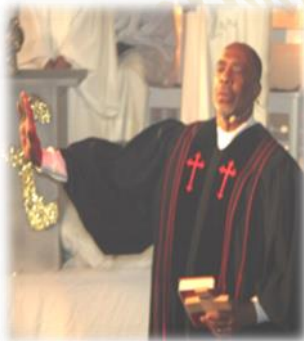
AND MAY YOU CONTINUE TO
BE BLESSED
AND HEAVEN BOUND!!



Heaven Bound



**Mary Stephens
 Dansby**



William "Bill" Davis



Louise J. Jones



**Sonja Elizabeth
 Ricks Mason**



**John "Jack"
 Moore, Jr.**

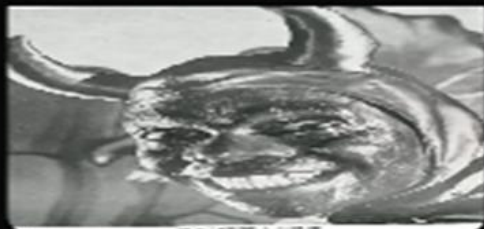


Willie Louise Robinson



Frances Evelyn Stephens

Heaven Bound memories through the years!





BIG BETHEL A.M.E. CHURCH

THE REVEREND JOHN FOSTER, PH.D. - SENIOR PASTOR



Welcome to Heaven Bound!

Greetings, Big Bethel Family and Friends,

Heaven Bound is an outstanding tradition of the Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Since this great morality play was written in 1930, it has reached thousands with its saving message.

This powerful dramatic ministry about the road to Heaven, and the many pitfalls we face trying to get there, mirrors the common struggles associated with daily life. You will not just be entertained but ministered to as you experience the journey to Heaven through the lives of the characters. You will grapple with sadness as Satan overcomes a few weak pilgrims along the way, but will rejoice with those who overcome Satan's power and make it through the pearly gates of Heaven.

I know that you will be blessed as you experience Heaven Bound. Let me thank the entire cast and volunteers of this our 92ND production. We salute those individuals - past, present, and future - who continue to work long and hard to produce the spiritual and musical extravaganza "Heaven Bound" annually. The Traditional version of the play, Friday, November 8th and the Contemporary version, Saturday, November 9th both begin at 7:00 pm at Big Bethel A.M.E. Church, 220, Auburn Avenue, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia 30303.

Sister Mary Ann, Kristina (Dewey, Zoey & Dewey IV), John, Jr., Jessica & Mother Laura Mae, the ministerial staff, officers and members of Big Bethel join me in welcoming you to share in the 92ND year of one of the most meaningful ministries of the place where we still proclaim that "Jesus Saves."

Sincerely,

Rev. John Foster, Ph.D., Senior Pastor

Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

A Brief History

Significant milestones have been etched into the fabric of Atlanta's growth and development by members of Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church during its 177-year history. Prior to emancipation, slave masters of the Methodist Episcopal Church provided a facility for our ancestors to worship at Bethel Tabernacle Church on the corner of Courtland and Jenkins Streets (now Georgia State University). Our founders, however never lost sight of their vision to organize a church for self-expression, self-help, self-government and most of all worship.

A warm handclasp between Rev. James Lynch, sent to organize the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the South, and Rev. Joseph Wood, member of Bethel Tabernacle, in Atlanta, resulted in Bethel Tabernacle becoming united with the African Methodist Episcopal connection in 1866. ***Morris Brown College*** was established in 1881, when Big Bethel AME Church hosted the North Georgia Annual Conference.

The first National Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was held at Big Bethel AME Church in 1919. A black Community Activist, Mr. Jesse O. Thomas, was able to convince the Atlanta City Council and the County Commission to each give \$5000 for rebuilding Big Bethel Church, after it was severely damaged by fire. The reason for supporting this request was due to Bethel's capacity to hold mass meetings of a non-denominational nature in the 1920's.

One of Atlanta's Historic Landmarks is Big Bethel's lighted cross, bearing the message "***Jesus Saves.***" The sign was installed in 1922. The blue neon-lighted sign on the church's steeple is still shining as a symbol of "***Hope for the World.***"

The Big Bethel AME Church's Heaven Bound Choir was featured at the premier of the film "***Gone With the Wind,***" gaining an international reputation in 1930. The morality play "***Heaven Bound,***" authored and produced at Big Bethel AME Church, has been performed for **92** successive years since that time.

In 1967 there was a legal change in the name of the church. The name was officially changed from Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Tabernacle to Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. The October 25, 1943, issue of The Christian Recorder commended Big Bethel Church for raising \$65,000 to clear the church indebtedness made in 1924. The article recognized the leadership of Rev. D. T. Babcock. Rev. Babcock's tenure of 14 years at the helm of Big Bethel Church has not been surpassed to this date.

During the administration of Rev. Reuben T. Bussey, the church celebrated its One Hundredth Birthday. One of the high points of his administration was the erection of Bethel Towers (a Resident Housing Facility) in 1968. On August 11, 2013, the mortgage for the \$3,514,700 building was burned.

Big Bethel's "Great Moller Organ" was initially installed in 1924 by the M.P. Moller Organ Company of Hagerstown, MD. The instrument was a three manual and pedal pipe, with 16 ranks. In 1987 the organ was completely restored and expanded under the pastorate of Rev. McKinley Young when the instrument was raised to 32 ranks.

Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

A Brief History (Continued)

Rev. James L. Davis, appointed as pastor of Big Bethel AME Church in 1992, established several ambitious projects and programs. Among his greatest projects was PROCEED (Prayerfully, Proclaiming Our Community, Empowering Economic Development), a catalyst for revitalizing “Sweet Auburn” and other communities. Some of the positive outgrowths include: the Trinity-Bethel Partnership, Big Bethel Village Senior Residences, and Renaissance Walk.

Rev. Mark Thompson served as pastor from 2004-2005. He nurtured the Seed and Proceed, History and Heritage Ministry, Computer Lab Restoration from the Canadian Group, the Babcock -Young Voices of Unity choir, inception of the Praise Team (a small choral group singing selections as a prelude to the worship service), the Bearden-Scott Youth Choir (Reverend Maurice Wright) and the Katrina Relief project. Presiding Elder David Rhone, Jr. served as interim Pastor (several months in 2005). Additionally, the “Big Bethel Saturday Academy” was established during the Thompson, Rhone year.

During the administration of Rev. Gregory V. Eason, Sr., in addition to his mantra of “Radical Hospitality,” FOCUS (Faithfully Obeying Christ with Unwavering Stewardship) was launched to raise funds for the church to retire the debt incurred in purchasing the Parking facility from Beaudry Ford Company. The parking lot is on John Wesley Dobbs & Jesse Hill, Jr. Drive.

In May, 2013, Rev. John Foster, Ph.D., was appointed as pastor of Big Bethel AME Church. On his watch, Big Bethel celebrated a Mortgage Burning Ceremony for the church and parking lot properties in October 2018. In addition to continuing the excellent programs and projects that are in progress, he launched a Video Ministry. The church services are streamed LIVE on the web weekly. [www.bigbethelame.org click the blue **WATCH LIVE AND ON-DEMAND** bar] This ministry helped to keep the church fully operational throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, during Rev. Foster’s administration, a digital marquee was installed in front of the church and Big Bethel gained income and advertising access to major billboards along I-75 near the church. May 2024 marked the 11th year of service for Rev. John Foster, Ph.D.

In the 177 years of Big Bethel's history, thirty-six ministers have served as pastor -'sainted spiritual leaders' of this flock. Three of those ministers, the Reverends Harold I. Bearden (1964), McKinley Young (1992), & James L. Davis (2004) were elected from Big Bethel's pulpit and consecrated as bishops in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. In addition, four other pastors, who were spiritual leaders of Big Bethel were elected and consecrated as Bishop in the AME Church, they are the Reverends Wesley J. Gaines, Joseph S. Flipper, and Isaac N. Ross and in August 2024, Rev. Dr. Gregory V. Eason was elected and consecrated as the 148th Bishop of the AME Church.



The mission of Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ: and to communicate to the world through preaching, teaching evangelizing, worshiping, and stewardship, that “*Jesus Saves*”!

To God Be the Glory, Great Things He Hath Done!

“From eternity comes the sound of many voices, voices of the ransomed hosts of God, the saints and the angels. These are they which came out to the great tribulations and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. They come singing-- the songs of the saints”

HEAVEN BOUND

Jory Young, Director
Ed Jones, Executive Director
Rev. Joyce Young, Choral Conductor (F)
Nathaniel Fisher, Jr., Choral Conductor (S)
Brenda G. Thomas Lyles, Musical Director
Phillip V. Skerrett, Jr., Organist

******* THE CAST *******

NARRATORS.....Bill Petty (F), Rev. Gwen Senatle (S)
SATAN.....Jory Young (F), Glenn Samuels (S)
IMP..... Christian Pettway
SAINT PETER.....Alvin Francis
SAINT CECELIA.....Juanita Aikens

ANGELS

Juanita Aikens	Kenyatta Copeland	Ruth McKenzie
Lisa Herring Brooks	Barbara Creamer	Clarissa Robinson
	Georgetta Dye	

THE HIGHWAY HERALD (S).....Celestial Choir
THE PILGRIM TO ZION.....Tonretha Harris (F), Joi Whiting (S)
THE WAYWORN TRAVELER.....Delvin Walker

THE PILGRIM OF THE CROSS.....Carol Ann Dove
THE STRIVER Cornelius Pettway
THE WAYWARD GIRL..... Racquel Battle
THE MOTHER’S GIRL.....Karon Stephens (F,S) Tonretha Harris (S)
THE MOTHER IN HEAVEN.....Cynthia Crane

THE RICH MAN.....Dr Stanley Pritchett (S).. Floyd Baxter (F)

THE WIDOW.....Linda Jolly (F) Donna Williams (S)

THE ORPHANSLehyani Lee, Bella Johnson

THE PILGRIM OF FAITH.....L. Samuel Stephens

THE PILGRIM TO THE PROMISE LAND.....Phyllislorena Smiley (F) Rev. Joyce Young (S)

THE GAMBLERS.....Christian Johnson, & Ishmael Buford

THE CHRISTIAN MOTHER.....Gwen Langley

THE PILGRIM OF SORROWAlexia Brookins

THE DETERMINED SOULDr. Jackie Washington (F), Kathryn Stanley (S)

THE PREACHER.....Keith Burnett

THE HYPOCRITE Angel McCurdy

THE BEDRIDDEN SOUL..... Rose Schofield

THE BURDEN BEARER.....Kathryn Stanley (F) Stephanie Moore (S)

THE REFORMED DRUNKARDJory Young (F), Glenn Samuels (S)

THE SOLDIER IN THE ARMY OF THE LORD.....Rev. Reginald Cleaver Jr.

FINALE

**All Hail Immanuel (F)
I Shall Wear A Crown (S)**



(F) - Friday (S) - Saturday



THE SPIRITUALS

DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE..... Ernest Tate (F) , Rev. Reginald Cleaver, Jr.. (S)

STEAL AWAY.....Karon Stephens

SWING LOW SWEET CHARIOT.....Carol Ann Dove (F)

HAND ME DOWN.....Glenn Samuels (F) Jory Young (S)

HEAVENLY TRIO

“My Lord’s Writing”

Carol Ann Dove
Deborah Hutchinson

HEAVENLY TRIO

“My Latest Sun Is Sinking”

Carol Ann Dove
Phyllislorena Smiley
Rev. Joyce Young

HEAVENLY SOLOS

“You Better Mind” arr. by Brenda G. Thomas Lyles

Bernice Bland

“Throw Out The Life Line”

Rev. Norris Walters

THE CELESTIAL CHOIR

Shrala Askin
Bernice Bland
Alexia Brookins
Mike Brown
Keith Burnett
Rev. Reginald Cleaver Jr.
Cynthia Crane
Carol Ann Dove

Leigh Haynes
Deborah Hutchinson
Jacquelyne Jones
Tawana Jones
Gwen Langley
Richard Marion
Stephanie Moore
Cornelius Pettway

Linda Pope
Celestine Rogers
Ja’Keilla Rouse
Phyllislorena Smiley
Karon Stephens
L. Samuel Stephens
Kathryn Stanley
Ernest Tate

Catherine Wainwright
Delvin Walker
Rev. Norris Walters
Dr. Jackie Washington
Joi Whiting
Donna Williams
Jory Young
Rev. Joyce Young

EXPRESSIONS

Jory Young, Artistic Director

THE BENEDICTION

Rev. John Foster, Ph.D., Senior Pastor



(F) - Friday (S) - Saturday

PRODUCTION STAFF

AUDIO-VISUAL

Brandon Collins
Cornelius Pettway
Phyllislorena Smiley

BODY PAK/AUDIO

Kristal Ammons
Linda Davis-Banks
Delaine Jones
Cornelius Pettway

CHURCH SECURITY

Ed Jones
Keith Burnett
Gary Everett
Skylar Security

LIGHTING

Marcus Black
Marvin Fleming
Cyril Mayes

LOGISTICS

Ed Jones

PROGRAM

Phyllislorena Smiley
Jory Young
Ed Jones
Rev. Joyce Young

MUSICIANS

Rev. Joyce Young, (F)
Nathaniel Fisher Jr. (S)
Choral Conductors
Brenda G. Thomas Lyles
Musical Director
Phillip Skerrett, Organist
Edward Gregory Samuels
Drums (S)

PROPERTY MGMT

Men of Big Bethel
Keith Burnett
Gary Everett

PUBLICITY

Ed Jones
Jory Young
Phyllislorena Smiley

SET DESIGN

Mark Jones
Marquise McAlpin

TICKET SALES

Joseph Patterson
Annette Petty
Charles Schofield
Rosaland Thomas

USHERS

Fred Brown
Cynthia Copeland
Eunice Davis
Maurice Eckstein
Everett Jolly
Linda Jolly
Felicia Jones
Tallulah Ragsdale-
Rosaland Thomas

WARDROBE

Cynthia Copeland
Jackie Herring
Rose Schofield
Louvenia Thomas



More Heaven Bound Memories





SAVE THE DATE

12•8•24

@4:00PM

for Big Bethel's

Come On Home For
CHRISTMAS Event!!



More details

COMING

SOON!



SAVE THE DATE

FOR THE

95TH PRODUCTION

OF

HEAVEN BOUND

NOVEMBER 7 & 8, 2025

**Would you like to participate in the 93rd Production
of HEAVEN BOUND for 2025?**

Scan the code or go to the link below.

<https://form.jotform.com/223114192058146>

