

St. Paul MBC of Jacksonville, Inc. ~ Bishop John E. Guns, Senior Pastor
Executive Pastor – Pastor J. Scott Cotton

Grace and Peace! Throughout my 24 years as a member of the servant team, I must say that 2021 gave us the opportunity to do great ministry. Although we have faced challenges in the world around us, we have been committed to living the vision and mission of our amazing church. I thank God for His grace in this season to allow me to serve our partners and the community. This season was a season that growth and consistency were still the focus of leaders and ministries. We also birthed some new and innovative approaches.

The making of Disciples has always been the focus of our church mission. We continued to push efforts on our Living Extraordinary Groups (LEGs). The curriculum of choice was “Spiritual Disciplines” by Richard Foster. This curriculum was designed to create an awareness of and provide applicable ways of living out those disciplines daily. As we enter 2022, We have a total of 11 active groups with a total of 247 partners that are assigned to LEGs. Our LEGs groups are scheduled to meet twice a month. Throughout 2021 our active partners in LEGs have attended a total of 680 group meetings. Innovation is important to us doing ministry, the LEGs not only focused on discipleship growth, but they participated in mission projects each month. We wanted to connect discipleship with a mission and to do that another innovative approach was the creation of FEED which means Faithfully Engaged Equipped Disciple! The ministry approach extended the arms of St. Paul into the community. Each LEGs group member was able to journal their mission experience. Our LEGs groups partnered with Pastor Barbara Johnson and the outreach ministry area to participate in the work of missions.

Fellowship has been one of the most valuable parts of St. Paul. It has been a joy working with Pastor G. to ensure that our fellowship ministries remained actively engaged with our partners. To continue to growth in fellowship and discipleship, we launched a new concept called Connection Groups to help facilitate positive and healthy relationships. Our first three connection groups are Walking with a Purpose, Gardening, and Investment. The goal is to launch one to two new groups a month. I believe that our partners with like interests will connect and grow.

With much determination to grow St. Paul, working with Pastor Ray Rouson was important as we both wanted to ensure that St. Paul was expanding on a global scale. Pastor Ray and I worked with leadership to provide them with virtual tools to continue to do ministry. We continue to seek new approaches that connect and grow our ministries.

As we begin to move through 2022, my goal is to strengthen our leadership culture to ensure that we meet the demands of the vision and mission. We are in a time where ministry must meet each partner and non-partners where they are. I believe that if there is not a strong ministry format then we fail the people we are called to serve. Growing every area of our church is front and center for me. LEGs must be our partners' foundation to stand on in challenging times, healthy relationships must become a focus for the empowerment of our partners, and a virtual system that is friendly to connect and keeps us all engaged. This will be the year for **Empowered living!**