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# Black Creek Baptist Church

by Megan Mantlo

On September 13, 2015 I attended the Sunday service held at 10:15 am at Black Creek Baptist Church, 6289 McClellan Road, Mechanicsville, Virginia 23111. Pastor Joe was presiding over the service this Sunday morning with certain passages read by different members of the church.

The outside of the church was simple but quaint. There seemed to be a lot of historical references to the building of the church. There was even a time capsule where one of the grandchildren or great grandchildren of the families who helped start and build the church could open in a certain year. Along down to the right of the church there was another smaller chapel which happened to be the original church before the bigger sanctuary was built later on. Behind the back of the church there was a cemetery where it looked as if there were large family plots of many of the families that attended the church beyond that there was a little dirt road that connected to the front parking lot. On the other side of the gravel road there was a play ground for children and a large field which looked like it could be used for kids activities or maybe could even extend the cemetery once there was no room left to bury others.

Inside the sanctuary was beautiful. There were large gold chandeliers hanging for the ceiling and a large stage where the pastor stood to preach and just behind the pastor was the church choir. There was also a large gorgeous

stained glass window with the picture of God in the middle almost levitating above the ground with his arms outstretched and a light surrounding him. The stained glass also pictures land, lakes, and animals. One animal I remember in particular was the red cardinal flying across the glass. According to the other members of the church a large sum of money had been donated to have the stained glass windows made and put in.

Looking around the church was predominately white but there were a few people that were hispanic and african american as well. Ages of the congregation went from newborns up to people who could be in their eighties to nineties. The church had a good amount of people but the sanctuary was large and built for a much bigger congregation and was not full to capacity. My brother came to the church with me so I would not be alone and we asked if the church used to have more people attending. They then told us that a few years before the church had disagreements and they split. The woman we asked seemed upset about it and she told us that it was a bad split because many families went separate ways and many people lost friends over it. She told us that the people who left the church stopped talking to everyone who stayed even when the people who stayed with the church tried to reach out to them. She told us the church used to be a big family and had many generations of families attending and they were one of the largest churches around and everything was

happy and joyful. The woman ,who's name I later learned was Robin, told us everyone with the church is still happy they just miss the way things used to be and they are trying to build the congregation back up to what it used to be.

Before the sermon the pastor spoke a few words and then asked for us all to stand and if we see a new face in the crowd for us to go introduce ourselves and make everyone feel welcome to their church. I thought this was a very nice idea because going into an unfamiliar church can be nerve racking and having everyone be welcoming makes everyone feel a lot better. The sermon (what I took from it) was done really well. The pastor spoke about being one with God and everyone working as a team and helping out mankind and that we all should be working together for God. He spoke of his childhood and he joked about how he grew up in Texas. He said, "In Texas everything is big. But growing up in Texas football is what you focus on. When a you have a child you buy them two things, if you have a boy you buy them a gun and a football and if you have a girl you buy them a doll and a gun!" He then said "Growing up my Dad was the high school football coach so of course I was on the football team. We soon found out that I sucked because I was too small to do much. My Dad then told me 'Son you don't have to be the best you just have to do your job on the team.' I looked at my Dad and said 'Okay Dad.' I then continued football and we went to states. Now I might not have done it all myself but something I did helped us get there and that is what we should all do." He is basically saying when we do our part for God we might not do it all but we do our job and that helps us get to where we are going. We need to work as a team and help each other.

What I really thought was nice was that at one point during the sermon he asked for all the young children to come up to the front and sit around him. Here the pastor told them a story that went along with his sermon and then helped explain what the story means in order to help the children (According to the people sitting around me they have children's time every Sunday where he does something similar). After he pulled out a hula hoop and told all the children to hold hands in a line and then proceeded to have them try to get the hula hoop all the way to the other end without breaking arms. At one point a little boy (the pastors son) broke arms ,which he joked and said,"Of course the pastors son is the one who brake arms and messed up!", and they had to start over and continue to work together.

Pastor Joe then asked for people from the congregation to get up and join them in the line and do the same thing. All sorts of people from the congregation joined in from older women to teenagers to mothers and fathers. I was among the people who joined the line. The line ended up going all the way down the aisle between the pews and started to turn around the back pew. We then did the same thing and we were able to get it all the way to the end over people who were all different shapes and sizes without dropping the hula hoop and breaking arms. The pastor then applauded us and asked us to all go sit back in our seats. Once seated he said now you can see first hand how we all need to work together and help our brothers and sisters in their journey to God. When he spoke I understood what his whole sermon was about and why he had us do that certain activity.

Throughout the service there were also many songs that they had the choir sing and some

that we got to join in on. Another different thing I noticed was that the pastor let some other people in the congregation give a prayer or two throughout at different times which I thought was very nice because it gives the congregation a feeling of belonging and helping out with the church.

At the end of the service they asked us all to stand to sing one last song and the pastor asks all of us to have a safe week and that he would see us next Sunday. They then began to play music and the pastor walked to the end of the aisle in order to tell everyone good bye as they left the church. Another man (who was the youth pastor) also walked to tell everyone good bye because he made an announcement at the beginning of the service letting everyone know he would be leaving the church and going to be a pastor at another church. It was nice to see that congregation of the church was not mad that he was leaving and they were all being very supportive of his move to another church and continuing his journey in Christ. As I left the church the pastor shook my hand and let me know he was glad I attended church and that he hoped to see me again. •

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