

THE BRIDGECARE CLASS LEADER MINISTRY

Modeling Excellence in Ministry



PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

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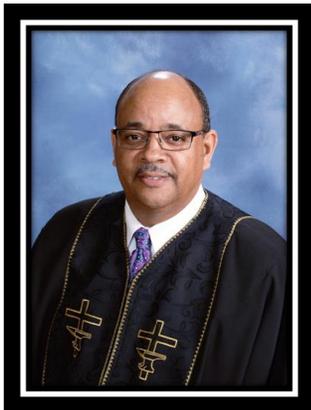
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“The Class Leader Ministry is vital to the growth of the local church because class leaders are responsible for not only managing new member intake and follow up, but class leaders are also responsible for ensuring that members have the necessary resources to keep them connected to the body as well as to God. This can only happen when class leaders are actively engaged with their class members.”



I am so grateful to Rev. Valerie, Rev. Michele and the Class Leaders for coming together to organize the work of the Class Leader Ministry. It will be through the hard work and dedication of the class leaders that our church will grow and remain connected to God and each other.

It is my prayer that each class leader will take the time to familiarize themselves with the information in this Guide so that they can manage their class in an excellent way, which is what God requires of every believer who is assigned leadership responsibilities in the kingdom!

When John Wesley organized the Class System, it was with the intent of cultivating piety and holiness among those who desired to affiliate with the Methodist denomination. John Wesley's other intent was to use the Class System as a means for spreading the Gospel to those who were unsaved and not affiliated with the Methodist denomination as well as help those of the Methodist denomination strengthen their faith walk. In other words, the Class System was not only an evangelistic arm of the Methodist denomination, and was, thus, responsible for the growth of the Methodist Church, but it was also used as a tool for forming believers' faith through prayer, bible reading and sharing of testimonies.

It is my sincere hope and prayer that the class leaders of Bridge Street AME Church will fully employ every aspect of the Class Leader Ministry to not only draw new believers into the body of Christ, but to develop believers (*through faith formation tools such as the Prayer Ministry, Bible Study and Sunday Church School*), and later deploy believers (*through evangelistic efforts of sharing the gospel*) into a dying world that needs to know and experience God through our Christian witness.

Thank you in advance for your untiring labor of love in carrying out God's great commandment to GO into the world to care for those who would otherwise not know God or have an opportunity to experience God through your gifts and graces.

Sincerely,
Pastor David B. Cousin, Sr.

How to Use this Guide

This guide was designed for use by the Class Leader Ministry, which is divided into three teams:

- The Membership Team is responsible for managing the intake of new members;
- The Nurture Team is responsible for organizing fellowship opportunities for the membership, as well as organizing meetings, training, and retreats for the class leaders;
- The Congregational Care Team is responsible for ensuring that all of Bridge Street's ill and homebound members are visited and communed on a monthly basis;

Every class leader needs to take time to familiarize themselves with the information and forms contained in this guide so they can function effectively in their assignment.

It is expected that each class leader will be an **ACTIVE** member of one of the teams listed above in order for the work of the Class Leader Ministry to function as intended by John Wesley, and the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

When the Class Leader Ministry is functioning properly, every member will feel connected to the body of Christ, and every member will be aware of who they need to contact when they are experiencing challenges with their faith, health, family, or personal life issues. We are a body, and the body can only function at its best when every member of the body is doing what they have been called and commissioned to do.

If you are a class leader, and you feel you are unable to assume the duties of this ministry, please advise the Pastor or the Executive Minister of your concern so that a replacement might be identified. Remember, we can only be as strong as our weakest link. If one person is not functioning effectively, their performance affects the entire body of believers as well as the Class Leader Ministry as a whole.

John Wesley: Class Leader System

When John Wesley organized the Class System, it was for the express purpose of instilling piety and religious commitment in those who would come to affiliate with the Methodist denomination.

In order to have something to offer others, Wesley first needed to be redeemed and ignited by the gospel. At Aldersgate, his soul came to life on May 24, 1738, when he first realized what it meant to be saved by faith in Jesus, and not by the good things he tried to do for God. (Wood 1967:67) Before this point, he knew that the goal of his life and the life of every Christian was real holiness.

However, before Aldersgate he did not know how to get there. He had the structure (the Holiness Club), but not the power. After this date, Wesley now had a message that he would give to the world. For the next 50 years, he would preach an average of 3 sermons a day. This explosive preaching literally started immediately after his Aldersgate experience. He knew instantly that God had tapped him into some very good news that everyone of his day desperately needed. Because he had no philosophy of ministry nor strategy to guide him, he did what any Anglican preacher would have done in his place: he gave sermon after sermon in the churches who invited him.

At the core, Wesley was a holiness advocate (we would call it “Lordship”), preaching true union with Christ and a total new life of obedience to Jesus in the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. He had a natural passion for church-background people like himself coming into saving faith like he had.

John Wesley was an extremely effective evangelist. By the end of his life, crowds would flock to hear him all over England, numbering up toward 20,000 listeners a day. But that was not his strongest suit. On top of his preaching, he was a master strategist who saw himself as shepherding a whole movement of evangelism. He poured himself into the raising up and training of young, like minded evangelists. By the end of his life, he had equipped 690 circuit preachers, or traveling evangelists. (Jebanathan 1985:77) Also, he never lost focus on what happened to his converts once they had made their commitments to Jesus. Because of this preoccupation with follow-up, when he died he had an amazing 72,000 thriving disciples of Jesus that he could count as the fruit of his ministry.

Wesley refused to fall prey to the “either/or” struggles that have eventually undermined the ministries of many evangelists in history. Wesley was an excellent “both/and” leader; he was absolutely committed to both evangelism and discipleship in every part of his ministry. He would simply not tolerate either one or the other to overtake his movement. He was able to effectively maintain this dual foci because he was convinced that true Kingdom growth produces simultaneously both deeper communities of committed disciples, and expanding communities of new disciples. To lose either one would have been an unthinkable tragedy for Wesley. *“We must build [make disciples] with one hand, while we fight [evangelize] with the other. And this is the great work, not only to bring souls to believe in Christ, but to build them up in our most holy faith.*

He told his preachers that they must always be focused on the nurture of those they help into the Kingdom, because otherwise “converts without nurture are like still-born babies” (Outler 1971:23). Accordingly, he made a personal commitment to never preach the gospel where he could not ensure that good follow-up would ensue. In his Journal, he wrote, “The devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half-awakened and then left to themselves to fall asleep again.” (Hunter 1982:14) Wesley was so committed to seeing his people grow in their holiness and obedience that he declared that “this doctrine of full sanctification is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists, and for the sake of propagating this chiefly He appears to have raised us up” (Morgan 1957:18).

As a point in contrast, it was widely recognized that George Whitefield, Wesley’s Barnabas, was an even better preacher than Wesley. However, Whitefield sorely lacked the strategic genius that made his friend Wesley such a great evangelistic leader. Whitefield compared his ministry with Wesley’s and confessed, “...my brother Wesley acted wisely. ***The souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in class [small groups], and thus preserved the fruits of his labors.*** This I neglected, and my people are a rope of sand” (Jackson 1839:69).

Whitefield labored diligently to become a good and fruitful evangelist. Helping people come to know Jesus was his all-consuming passion. Yet his lack of excellent strategy cost him dearly, and even he saw his fruit fading right before his eyes.

So how did Wesley accomplish the impossible? How did he get fruit that lasts? He had a God-given goal, he created a strategy to achieve that goal, and he styled his preaching to honor that goal. He never took his eyes off his goal: maturity, obedience, and real sanctification for every member of his movement. ***It is no accident that Wesley's movement produced tens of thousands of profoundly committed disciples of Jesus.*** That was Wesley's vision from the beginning, and he made sure that he did everything in his power to fulfill that vision. ***He knew from the start that he would never be satisfied with followers who were a "rope of sand" falling between his fingers.*** So he made the hard choices to ensure the implementation of his vision. ***He created structures that would make his goal a living reality in the lives of his followers. He brought his experience of deep Christian community from the Holiness Club into the Methodist movement. He knew that every believer needs concrete help fleeing from sin, so he provided the strategy and training to make sure that this happened for every convert.*** Needless to say, Wesley's vision and intentionality paid off enormously.

He was not satisfied with any preaching that did not end in changed lives and people who were motivated to become Jesus' disciples. If one of his preachers articulately explained justification by faith alone, but they did not call for the audience to then have a radical change of lifestyle, Wesley would be angry indeed. Sanctification and holiness were not things that could wait until a sermon on discipleship. ***Every convert needed to know ahead of time that Jesus would call for nothing less than full obedience and transformation.***

Talking about forgiveness of sin without practical calls to live a life free from the habits of sin was a complete waste of time for Wesley. Every evangelistic message needed a very practical component to deal with obedience issues and sanctification. Wesley expected new converts to know that being a Christian meant to leave behind the old life and embrace a new lifestyle of holiness. He had no patience for "cheap grace", offering justification without sanctification. Did this unorthodox evangelism pay off? As stated before, 72,000 people found regeneration under this high-bar, full-gospel, whole-counsel-of-God style of evangelistic preaching.

Wesley also had a life-long passion to see more people included in the fold of God's love. When one of his groups would shrink in size and diminish in effectiveness in reaching the lost, he became alarmed. In his Journal on July 6, 1788, Wesley records how he visited a church of twenty that used to be fifty. His interpretation: "What can be done to remedy this sore evil?" (Wesley 1989:473) He could have merely conceded that it must have been the will of God that this church shrink. Not for Wesley. ***His passion was that every Methodist would be a missionary, and that every non-Christian be given more chances to respond to the gospel. To him, a group of Christians who failed to reach out and grow was a "sore evil". Wesley expected growth and conversions, and because he expected so much from God and from his people, he usually got what he expected.***

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AME: Class Leader System

(Source: *The Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church*)

What is a Class Leader? A person assigned to a class.

How many people are assigned to a Class? 12 or more persons.

What is the purpose of the Class Leader Ministry?

1. To *discern* whether members are working out their soul salvation.
2. To *receive* what members contribute to the support of the gospel.

What are the qualifications for Serving as a Class Leader?

1. *Appointed annually* by the minister.
2. Shall serve as long as their *conduct is satisfactory*.
3. Shall be *examined quarterly* by the minister and the presiding elder.

What are the duties of the Class Leader?

1. To *meet* the members in class once a week, to *inquire* how each soul prospers, to *visit* members from time to time, and to *receive* what their class members are willing to contribute for the support of the gospel.
2. To *read* the rules of the Band Societies to those who meet with the class for the first time
3. To *visit* other classes frequently.
4. To *converse* with their pastors *frequently* and *freely* to admit non-members to their class meeting no more than three times, with none of them to be consecutive.
5. To *include*, *suspend*, and *expel* members from the class meeting.
6. To *watch over* probationers with special care and *recommend* those who are eligible at the end of the ninety (90) days for full membership, upon their profession of saving faith in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
7. To *report* to the Official Board:
 - a. Those who are *sick*.
 - b. Those who work *disorderly* and will not be approved.
 - c. The amount of *money collected* for the support of the gospel, pay the same to the stewards.
8. To *serve* as leaders for children's classes. Such leaders shall perform the duties as outlined above and, in addition, give instruction in the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Duties and Responsibilities of Bridge Street Class Leaders

At Bridge Street, class leaders wear many hats. They organize opportunities for the church body to come together in fellowship; they coordinate visitation to ill and homebound members; and they develop opportunities for class leaders to hone and perfect their gift of stewarding the membership in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

New Member Assignments

When new members are assigned to a class, the leader should sit in on at least one new member class so that the new member will have an opportunity to meet their class leader. If a class leader is assigned a new member, but does not have the proper contact information for their member, it is the class leader's responsibility to contact the Minister to Class Leaders or the Administrative Office to obtain that information. Class Leaders should contact their members at least monthly or more frequently if possible.

Class Members' Hospitalization

When class leaders are informed of the hospitalization of a class member, it is the class leader's responsibility to call or visit the member while they are in the hospital. It is the class leader's responsibility to notify the Administrative Staff at Bridge Street of a member's hospitalization so that a member of the ministerial staff might arrange to call or visit the hospitalized member. A call to the class member to obtain their permission for a visit should be the protocol that class leaders follow prior to visiting class members at home or in the hospital.

Acknowledging Special Occasions in Class Members' Lives

When a class member experiences death in the family, illness, anniversaries or birthdays, class leaders should call, email or send a card to acknowledge these events in their class member's life. Churches grow when members feel connected and when they feel they are cared for and thought about when they are absent from church or are going through challenging times.

Comforting the Bereaved

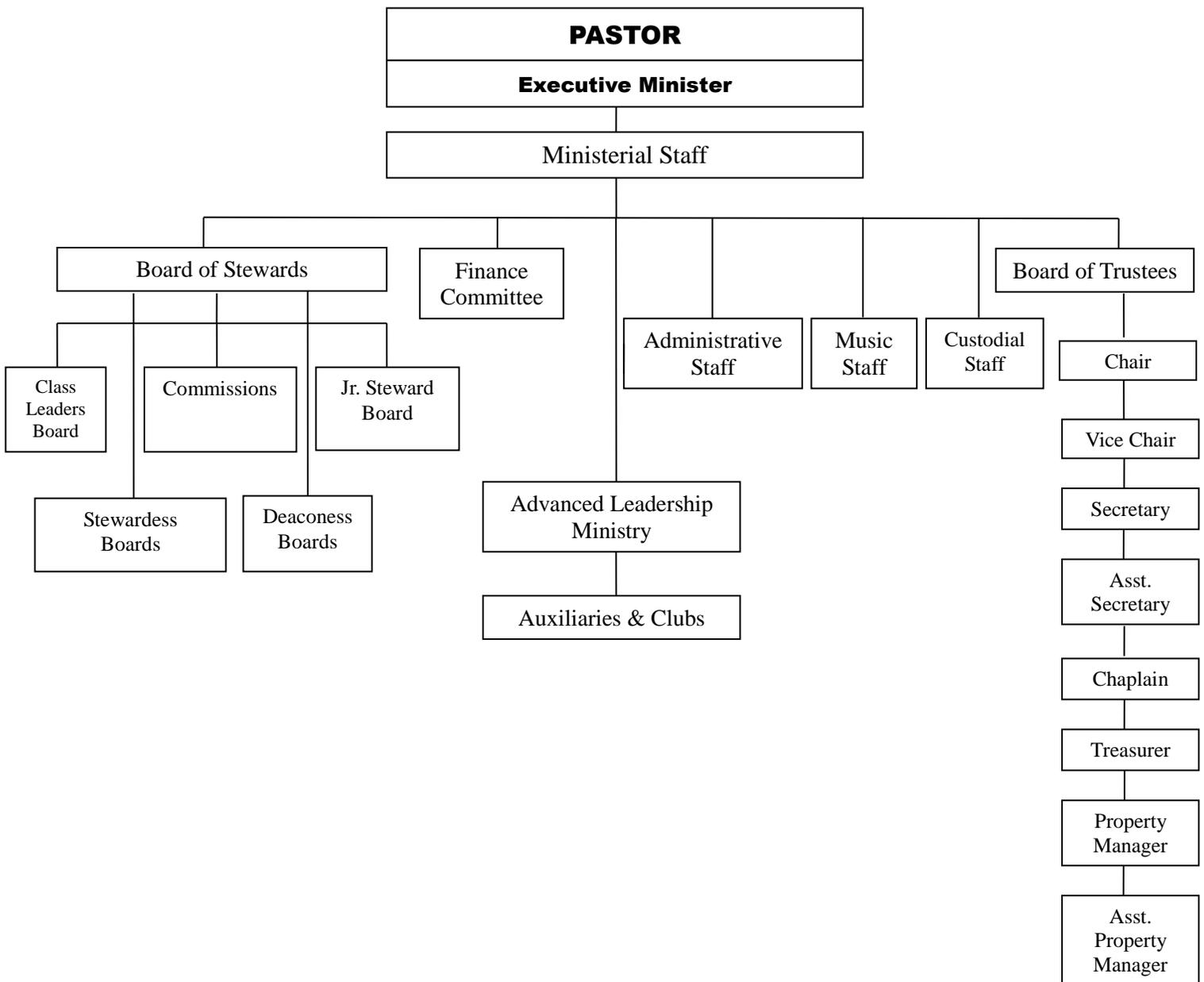
During times of bereavement, class leaders should contact their class members to express their condolences as well as to arrange a visit to have prayer with the class member's family, where possible. During the visit, the class leader may offer words that are encouraging, comforting, and inspiring to the family's spirit. In addition, a bible scripture may be recited, a hymn sung and a prayer offered. Visits should be kept brief and professional. Class Leaders should not use their time of visitation to gossip about the pastoral leadership or conflicts between leaders of church ministries, nor should class leaders suggest funeral homes or crematories to the deceased's family.

Giving Witness of A Class Member's Life

On the day of a deceased class member's Home Going Service, all class leaders are to be dressed in dark clothing (black or blue) with white shirts or blouses, if suits are worn. The class leader of the deceased will provide a witness of the deceased's life and work in the church.

Organizational Structure of the Church

Listed below is an organizational chart outlining the structure of Bridge Street African Methodist Episcopal Church.



Structure of the Bridgecare Class Leader Ministry

The Class Leader Ministry of Bridge Street is organized under the BridgeCare Ministry which consists of three teams: 1) Membership; 2) Nurture; and 3) Congregational Care. The responsibilities of each team is listed below.

Membership Team Responsibilities	Nurture Team Responsibilities	Congregational Care Team Responsibilities
1) Intake of new members on Sunday.	1) Organize quarterly class meeting.	1) Arrange for ministers to visit ill and homebound members.
2) Place New Member Input forms in mailbox located upstairs outside of Pastor's office.	2) Organize semi-annual fellowship for congregation.	2) Contact ministers and class leaders when members request communion or visits.
3) Refer new members to the Executive Minister, Rev. Val, for baptism class.	3) Organize annual retreat for class leaders.	3) Ministers will be contacted to visit members using an alpha structure: A-F; G-J; L-P; R-Z. Pastor will be asked to assign two ministers to each alpha category. In this way, if one minister can't be reached or is unavailable, the second minister would be called to make the visitation.
4) Assist with follow up of new members that did not complete new member class.	4) Organize semi-annual orientation for new class leaders.	
	5) Organize an annual Day of Service to immerse the entire congregation in service to our ill and homebound members (crochet blankets, etc).	
	6) Organize semi-annual new member fellowship to acquaint new members with the class leaders and congregants.	

"Above all, maintain constant love for one another; be hospitable to one another without complaining; Serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received" 1 Peter 4:8-10

Characteristics of a Great Class Leader

Listed below are characteristics common to good class leaders.

- A desire to support the vision and leadership of the Pastor.
- A burning desire to see your church and God's kingdom grow.
- An uncanny desire to share with others about God's AMAZING grace.
- A heart that longs to serve God and humankind.
- An awareness of your spiritual gifts.
- A loving spirit.
- A willingness to serve God's people.
- A dedication to the study of God's word.
- A desire to connect with God's sheep.
- An ability to create opportunities for fellowship.
- A peacemaking spirit.
- A candid demeanor that deals righteously with sin.
- A heart that forgives.
- A giving and generous spirit.
- A readiness to extend grace.

If you possess the tools listed above, then you are on your way to becoming an excellent class leader and a great servant leader over God's people.

Creative Ideas for Managing Your Class

There are many creative ways for class leaders to manage their classes as a means of keeping members connected to one another for fellowship as well as growing and developing spiritually. Class leaders are encouraged to try different ways of bringing members together for fellowship.

While there is no one set way to effectively manage your class, being creative with how you manage your class can keep your members engaged with one another and with the church. Below are some ideas class leaders have shared on managing their class members.

Some leaders have:

- Partnered with other class leaders to host a joint fellowship or dinner event.
- Invited their class members to the movies or bowling.
- Asked class members to join them for Sunday School or bible study.
- Encouraged class members to come to church early for breakfast in the fellowship hall to get to know one another.
- Convened a conference call with class members to pray.
- Invited class members to come to church early so they can all sit together in one section of the church.
- Made name tags and asked class members to wear their name tags during the service.
- Invited their class members to be present at special church functions such as Family and Friends Day in July; Church Anniversary Sunday in February; or Class Leader Fellowships.
- Obtained class members' birthday and anniversary dates to send cards to class members.
- Called their class members at least once per week to check on them.
- Made a concentrated effort to find out where in the sanctuary their class members sit so they can keep watch for them. This way, they are more apt to know when their members are absent from Sunday service.
- Traveled together to AME meetings or on church-sponsored bus rides.
- Sent letters along with a photo to introduce themselves to their class members in hopes that their members would be able to more readily identify them during the worship service.



Sample Letter to Class Member #1

Dear Sister/Brother in Christ,

As a willing worker for Christ and in obedience to His holy will, I have accepted the leadership position of class 43.

A meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible so that my assistant Sis. Jacqueline Williams and I can meet the members of our class and give you the opportunity to meet your fellow class members. Through our efforts we will be able to maintain a strong class.

If you need to get in contact with either one of us feel free to call me at (718) 452-3936 or (718) xxx-xxxx or Sis. Jackie at (718) xxx-xxxx have taken the liberty of including photos of ourselves so that you can become familiar with our faces and identify us when you see us in church. Our telephone is always open to you for prayer, to let us know of any illness with you, or any of our class members, for a friendly chat or for any other concerns that may be of importance to you or us as a group.

Yours in Christ,

Sis. Deloris Canty
Class Leader
Class 43

Sis. Jacqueline Williams
Assistant Class Leader
Class 43

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy path.” Proverbs 3:6



**CLASS #43
Leader
DELORIS CANTY**



**CLASS #43
Assistant Leader
JACQUELINE WILLIAMS**



Sample Letter to Class Member #2

February 25, 2015

Sister Mary Jane
xxxx Carroll Street
Brooklyn NY 112234

Dear Sister xxxx,

We greet you with the Joy of Jesus and extend warm wishes to you and your family.

Sister Veronica Okodiko and I are writing to you to introduce ourselves. We are your class leaders. As the pastoral arm of leadership, it is the responsibility of class leaders to get to know the members of their class and to keep the pastoral leadership informed of issues affecting class members. Due to the many programs and ministries of the church, it is difficult for the Pastor to remain abreast of the well-being of the membership, which is why every member is assigned to a Class with a Class Leader. Should you require prayer, visitation or communion, we are the persons you should contact for these services. We would then contact the Church's administrative staff to advise them of your needs.

We have taken the liberty of including photos of ourselves so that you can become familiar with our faces and identify us when you see us in church. Please reach out to us by email, phone or in person as we would like to get to know our members by face so that we can look out for your well-being and report the same to our Pastor. We also plan to organize some fellowship activities in the future so that the members of our Class can get to know each other.

In the meantime, please stay warm and safe during your travels. We look forward to meeting you soon.

Yours in Christ,



CLASS #39
Leader
SOWONEE DUWORKO



CLASS #39
Assistant Leader
VERONICA OKODIKO

**BRIDGECARE CLASS LEADER MINISTRY
SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES**

EVENT DATE	TIME	LOCATION	EVENT	PURPOSE OF MEETING
Annually on the 3 rd Saturday in June	10AM-Noon	Fellowship Hall	Class Leader Retreat	To discuss the Class Leader Ministry and how to effectively minister to the members of our congregation
Semi-annually in January and June	11am	Senior Lounge	Class Leader Orientation	To discuss the responsibilities of being a class leader
Quarterly on a Saturday or Sunday	TBD	Chapel	Class Leader Meeting	To report on the status of members; discuss ways to minister effectively to our members
Quarterly or Semi-annually as warranted	TBD	Chapel	New Member Fellowship	To allow members of the congregation to meet and greet our new members
Annually on the 3 rd Sunday in September	12:30pm	Chapel	Class Leaders Annual Day Reception	To provide an opportunity for the congregation to meet and greet their class leader and be assigned to a class if they don't have a leader
Semi-annually on a Saturday in May and October	11am	Fellowship Hall	Church-wide Fellowship	To bring the congregation together for food, fun and fellowship

Directory of Class Leaders

Class #1

Sis. Corrine Williams, Leader

Class #2

Sis. Violet Roland, Leader
Sis. Ellen Hostler, Asst. Leader

Class #3

Bro. Charles Drake, Leader

Class #4

Sis. Clarendine Campbell, Leader
Bro. Timothy Moses, Asst. Leader

Class #5

Bro. Gustavus Ademu-John, Leader

Class #6

Sis. Carmen Rosario Johnson, Leader

Class #7

Evangelist Annie Robinson, Leader

Class #8

Sis. Mildred Crews, Leader

Class #9

Sis. Samantha Benton, Leader

Directory of Class Leaders

(Cont'd)

Class #10

Sis. Marion Cunningham, Leader

Class #11

Sis. Linda Jones, Leader
Sis. Trudy Johnson, Asst. Leader

Class #12

Sis. Erica Garraway, Leader

Class #13

Sis. Irene Evans, Leader

Class #14

Sis. Marcia Melendez, Leader

Class #15

Sis. Linda Joyce Wallace, Leader

Class #16

Sis. Audrey Harvey, Leader

Class #17

Sis. Martha Adams, Leader

Class #18

Sis. Betty Sherrill, Leader

Class #19

Sis. Julia Blair, Leader

Directory of Class Leaders *(Cont'd)*

Class #20

Bro. Elker Smith, Leader
Sis. Dorothy Rhames, Asst. Leader

Class #21

Sis. Virginia Risbrook, Leader

Class #22 (*Merged with Class #18*)

Sis. Betty Sherrill, Leader

Class #23 (*Merged with Class #44*)

Sis. Veronica Shervington, Leader

Class #24

Sis. Adjua Starks, Leader

Class #25

Versie Brown, Leader

Class #26

Sis. Sarah Hall, Leader
Sis. Eugene Cameron, Asst. Leader

Class #27

Sis. Ruby Pack, Leader

Class #28

Bro. Walter E. Mewborn, Leader

Directory of Class Leaders *(Cont'd)*

Class #29

Sis. Brenda Cannon-Moussa, Leader
Sis. Barbara Brown, Asst. Leader

Class #30

Sis. Helen Galloway, Leader

Class #31

Sis. Audrey Vaughan, Leader
Sis. Phyllis Johnson, Asst. Leader

Class #32

Sis. Ivy Williams, Leader

Class #33

Bro. Joshua Williams, Leader

Class #34

Evangelist Carolyn Simmons, Leader

Class #35

Sis. Bernice Lewis, Leader

Class #36

Bro. Colin Johnson, Leader

Directory of Class Leaders *(Cont'd)*

Class #37

Sis. Verna Ademu-John, Leader
Sis. Jacqueline Duberry, Asst. Leader

Class #38

Sis. Betty Washington, Leader

Class #39

Sis. Sowonee Duworko, Leader
Sis. Veronica Okodiko, Asst. Leader

Class #40

Sis. Thomasena Williams, Leader

Class #41

Bro. Alonzo Graves, Leader
Bro. Greg Jones, Sr., Asst. Leader

Class #42

Sis. Anne Brunson, Leader

Class #43

Sis. Deloris M. Canty, Leader
Sis. Jacqueline Williams, Asst. Leader

Directory of Class Leaders

(Cont'd)

Class #44

Sis. Veronica Shervington, Leader

Class #45

Sis. Priscilla Sedney, Leader

Class #46

Sis. Barbara Boone, Leader

Class #47

New Member Class

Class #48

Karen Anderson, Leader

Class #49

Sis. Deborah Knight, Leader

Class #50

Sis. Arita Babb, Leader

Quotes to Live by:

“Having, First, gained all you can, and, Secondly saved all you can, Then give all you can.”
John Wesley, English Evangelist & Founder of Methodism (1703 – 1791)

“...[W]e are loaded with countless church activities, while the real work of the church, that of evangelizing and winning the lost, is almost entirely neglected.”
Oswald J. Smith, Missions Advocate (1889 – 1986)

“Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the souls you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal you can, as long as ever you can.”
John Wesley, English Evangelist & Founder of Methodism (1703 – 1791)

Process for New Member Intake

When members are drawn by God's Spirit to unite with the Bridge Street family, the following process is followed:

1. The new member is prayed for by one or more ministers.
2. The new member's name is written down on an index card along with information about whether they are coming to accept Christ; are transferring from another church; or desire baptism;
3. Once the new member is taken to the altar to be introduced to the congregation, the Pastor or a member of the ministerial staff will introduce the candidate for membership to the congregation, and then proceed to ask three questions to candidates for membership:
 - a. Do you believe that Jesus died to save you from sin?
 - b. Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?
 - c. Do you believe Jesus died and was raised from the dead?

If the candidate for membership responds affirmatively to all three questions, and they should if they have been prepped by the ministers prior to being escorted to the altar, then they are received into the body of Christ.

4. The new member is asked to return to their seat to secure their personal belongings, and to connect with a member of the Membership Team in the room behind the drums. (The New Member Intake form can be found in a clear plastic bin located underneath the balcony stairs on the Jefferson Street side of the church.)
5. It is the responsibility of the Membership Team to inform new members of the day/time of New Member Class, which is on Sundays at 9am in Room 3.
6. Completed New Member Intake forms should be placed in the New Member Intake mailbox located outside of Pastor's Office on the second floor. The Administrative Staff will forward the original New Member Intake form to the Receptionist for the church's records, and retain a copy in the New Member Intake binder.
7. It is the responsibility of the Administrative Office Staff to request an envelope number for all new members as well as provide new members with giving envelopes on the Sunday following their intake.

Pertinent Information Concerning New Member Intake

Completing the New Member Intake Form

All new members are required to complete a New Member Intake Form at the conclusion of the worship service. The Membership Team must review all forms for accuracy and completeness prior to dismissing new members. Completed New Member Intake Forms must be placed in the mailbox labeled New Member Intake, which is located outside the Pastor's Office on the second floor.

Assigning New Members to Classes

All new members are to be assigned to Class #47 until they have completed their New Member Class, which is four sessions, and typically takes about two months to complete. Upon completion of the New Member Class, a decision will be made by the Minister to Class Leaders on a permanent class assignment for the new member. In rare circumstances, new members may be assigned to a class other than Class #47 if the new member has a relationship with a current class leader or the new member has made a request to be put on a specific class.

Every attempt will be made to assign new members to classes whose leaders appear to be a good fit for them spiritually. New members should try, as much as possible, to refrain from requesting a class assignment that partners them with their best friends. Because the role of the class leader requires leaders to become intimately involved in the spiritual life of their members, class members who are best friends with their class leader may be less inclined to share spiritual struggles and failures with their class leader if their class leader is also their friend. Having friends as class members may also affect the leader's ability to facilitate and nurture spiritual growth in the lives of their members.

Assigning Envelope Numbers & Envelopes to New Members

Within the first couple of weeks after joining Bridge Street, all new members should be given a box of envelopes and assigned an envelope number. Envelope numbers are requested from the bookkeeper once the Administrative Office staff receives the New Member Intake Form. The bookkeeper will mail a letter to the new member informing them of their envelope number as well as when they should use the number.

Informing New Members of New Member Class Day/Time

During the course of completing the New Member Intake Form, new members should be apprised by the Membership Team of the day and time of the New Member Class.

Informing New Members of Baptism Class

If new members express a desire for baptism during their intake, they should be informed that baptism class is held on the first Wednesday at 6:00p.m. for persons who have pre-registered for the class with the Executive Minister. They can email Rev. Valerie for a registration packet at revvalcousin@aol.com or call the office to arrange to pick up a registration packet. The baptism class lasts approximately ninety minutes and covers the purpose and benefits of baptism as well as The Apostles' Creed, 10 Commandments, 25 Articles of Religion, and How to Pray. Baptisms are held on the 3rd Sunday of each month for those persons who have completed the baptism class.



NEW MEMBER INTAKE FORM

Date Joined:	Class #:	Class Leader:	
DOB:	Place of Birth:		Env #:
Name:			
Address:		Apt #:	<input type="checkbox"/> Private House
City:		State:	Zip:
H Phone:		Cell Phone:	
Email Address:			
<input type="checkbox"/> please sign me up for the e-newsletter			

Have you been baptized? YES NO
 Are you rejoining Bridge Street Church? YES NO
 Are you transferring from another AME Church? YES NO

Do you have any FRIENDS or RELATIVES in Bridge Street Church? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO (If yes, list below)	
1. Name:	Relationship:
Phone:	Email:
2. Name:	Relationship:
Phone:	Email:

Marital Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Single	Spouse's Name (if married):
Anniversary Date:	Child/ren's Name(s):
Hobbies & Interests:	
Emergency Contact Name & Phone #:	
Name of Class Leader Completing Form:	



NEW MEMBER WELCOME LETTER

Dear New Member:

Welcome to your new Church Home! We are glad you are here, and we are excited that you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life. However, that is only the beginning of your faith journey. God has lots in store for you to learn and do through your membership at Bridge Street AME Church! **Your first step in this journey is to complete New Member Class, which is held on Sundays at 9am in Room 3 in the lower level of the church.** In that class you will learn about the Methodist denomination, our faith doctrines such as salvation, sin, redemption and grace, our Church’s history, and finding your fit in Bridge Street Church.

If you have not been baptized and desire the sacrament of baptism, please contact Rev. Valerie Cousin to schedule your baptism class. The class meets on the first Wednesday of each month; however, you must be pre-registered as there is a mandatory lesson that must be completed prior to attending the class.

Please take a moment to review this letter and to contact the appropriate person listed below should you have questions about your faith, how to become involved in your church or any of the ministries at your church. If you would prefer speaking to a ministry leader on the phone, please call the church at (718) 452-3936 and leave your name, phone number, and the nature of your call and the appropriate person will get back to you.

Again, welcome to your new Church Home!

Rev. David B. Cousin, Sr., Pastor

----- MINISTRY CONTACTS -----

New Member Class Sundays @ 9am, Rm3	Rev. Charles Griffin Cgrif4real@aol.com	Young Adult Ministry 4 th Sundays	Min. Monique Wheeler missmwheeler@yahoo.com
Baptism Class 1st Wed @ 6pm	Rev. Valerie E. Cousin revvalcousin@aol.com	Sunday School Sundays @ 9am	Sis. Jacqueline Williams Jdsw916@msn.com
Class Leader Ministry	Rev. Michele Grimes Revmgrimes@gmail.com	Girl Scouts Fridays @ 6pm	Sis. Yvonne Anderson Yfand7@verizon.net
Prayer Ministry Saturdays @ 9am	Evang. Carolyn Simmons prettyseason@aol.com	Men’s Ministry Tuesdays @ 7pm	Rev. Charles Griffin Cgrif4real@aol.com
Youth Ministry Fridays @ 6:30pm	Rev. April Beckles Abeckles37@gmail.com	Women’s Ministry	Rev. Valerie E. Cousin Revvalcousin@aol.com

Welcoming New Members

Below are some suggestions for welcoming new members into Bridge Street. These are not new ideas, they are a collection of thoughts that have been shared with me over the thirty plus years I have been pastoring.

How can we do that? We can make new members feel welcome by:

- Sending them a formal letter of welcome.
- Establish genuine relationships with new members by learning new members' names or by sitting with new members during worship services, programs or events.
- Provide a new member packet to new members before or during the New Member Class.
- Distribute the Church's pictorial directory so new members can begin to match members' names with their faces.
- Sign new members up for the church's electronic newsletter.
- Maintain a new member bulletin board in a very visible area within the church to display new member photos with their names.
- Wear name tags one Sunday during service or in the Sunday School class to help new members become more acquainted with the membership.
- Develop a new member team that would be responsible for coming up with ways to immerse new members into the church.
- Identify entry level tasks that can be assumed by new members to make them feel part of the church fellowship.
- Being helpful (anticipating questions and being prepared to answer them).
- Smiling (as a sign of friendliness).
- Being inviting (assuming body posture that is friendly and inviting to visitors).
- Exuding warmth (through personal interactions).
- Embracing or hugging new members.
- Finding ways to connect new members with others they share commonalities with, i.e.:
 - Similar birthplaces or hometowns;
 - Similar job functions or titles;
 - Familiar hobbies or past times, etc.
- Making sure new members are aware of:
 - New Member Class (time, location)
 - Bible Study (time, day)
 - Sunday Church School (time)
 - New Member Welcome Reception (when held)
 - Purpose and Function of the Class Leader Ministry

New Member Assimilation

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“Assimilation” is the process of bringing people into the life of a group. When new members are assimilated into your church, they feel a part of the church and begin to experience the church's traditions as their own. They feel the ties that bind them in the common identity of your church, and old members accept and appreciate them. For people to be truly assimilated, both the old and the new members of the church must feel that the new members “belong”. All members are then bonded together in their commitment to Christ and by the traditions of your church.

History and Background

The assimilation of members into the Christian community has been a challenge from the beginning. Paul chastised the Corinthians for their divided loyalties and failure to “be united in the same mind and the same purpose” in the company of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:10-17). Through much of the church's history people were considered assimilated by being of “the same mind and judgment” doctrinally and by participating in the worship and rites of their tradition without deviating into heresy.

In the recent American Protestant tradition, however, the church has emerged as an organization with education, service and programs of ministry extending far beyond its central life of worship. So assimilation comes not only in affirming the church's doctrines and in participating in worship, but also in accepting and being part of the total life of the community of faith.

Assimilation occurs not when people attend church services and events, nor even when they join the church by confessing or reaffirming a commonly held faith. It happens when they feel that they belong, and become fully accepted and active parts of the body. This is an ongoing and dynamic process and may take different forms. It once took place because people grew up in a church, and its traditions were their traditions. Today, because people move frequently, reaching out, recruiting and receiving new members is essential. Then new arrivals must be woven into the fabric of the church's community.

Common Practices

Some churches feel that a friendly greeting to first-time visitors or new members is all it takes. It is then up to the newcomers to keep on coming and to participate. Most churches do more. They have guest books or attendance cards for newcomers.

Many churches place an attendance sheet in each pew for everyone to sign, hoping that newcomers will get to know the names of other members too. They may use name badges for all who attend. Some churches have a plan for telephone calls and visits by members. Some have a plan for members familiar with the church's activities to take a new member's family in its care to help them feel welcome.

New members quickly discover the smaller groups within churches where interaction, service, common interest and belonging seem to occur: choirs; boards; committees; teams and organizations of women, men, youth, couples and singles; or devotional and study groups. Such small groups can be major positive factors in assimilation. Sometimes they become principal deterrents, because it is difficult for new people to break into these close-knit small groups. Some churches have discovered that one way to help people feel they belong is to have them share in a task. The church's mission becomes their own as they work toward it. One task in which some churches involve new members is ushering where they meet many members.

You can begin discovering how well people are assimilated in your church by considering whether there are any people who have joined the church in the last year who attend worship services, but aren't otherwise involved in the church's life. Are there people who have joined, but who really never became active? It may be that these people have a sense of belonging from their participation in worship, but if that is a pattern, people probably aren't feeling fully apart of the church's life.

Responsibilities

Helping new members become part of the church's life is everybody's responsibility. Of course, "everybody's responsibility" can easily become nobody's, or only the pastor's. Few newcomers leap into the unknown easily. You must provide entry points. Here are some suggestions of ways to do that:

- Assigning to one group or committee the responsibility of planning ways to assimilate new members.
- Assigning to one group or committee the responsibility of assuring that visitors are welcomed, helped to feel comfortable, and encouraged to return.
- Giving new membership kits with information on the history, beliefs, mission and opportunities for study, service and companionship in the church.
- Preparing a brochure or flyer with information for visitors about the church.
- Conducting orientation sessions for new or prospective members with the church's staff and a wide range of committed lay leaders, who share their dreams for the church.
- Matching each new member or family with a sponsor from within the congregation who invites and brings the new member to church activities, checks on and tries to meet the new person's needs or family's needs, and is on hand at church activities for introductions.
- Posting photographs and biographical sketches of the new people for others to see.
- Using the newsletter as a way to introduce new members to the church family.
- Using nametags for all church activities.
- Nominating new people to boards and committees.
- Using photograph albums of the church family as a way for new-comers to put names with faces.
- Planning a time at each church function for community building activities that help everyone know one another better.
- Planning activities that focus on new members: a new member at each table at a potluck meal, an open house where representatives of organizations explain their purpose, or recognition of new members at an annual meeting.
- Providing position descriptions telling duties, accountability, training available, and support for each volunteer position in the church. While people who have been around a while may know all the ropes, your ways of doing things may not be so clear to new members.
- Keeping a card on new members through their first year in the congregation, recording participation in worship, groups and special activities, expressed or revealed needs and how the church met them.

- Having a volunteer ministry program that includes a way to discover skills, knowledge and ways people want to participate, and a way to match skills with positions.
- Designing and sustaining small groups for nurture through study, prayer and personal sharing.
- Making certain that announcements are easily understood. Especially be wary of using abbreviations and first names only, which can make new people feel left out.
- Making sure people don't feel left out because of barriers preventing access by people with disabilities or barriers caused by racism, sexism, ageism or cultural assumptions, such as speaking as if everyone is part of a nuclear family.
- Providing opportunities for new members to serve ex officio on any board for one year.
- Periodically bringing people together and asking what membership means and how their experiences could be strengthened.

Issues Facing the Church

- The purpose of assimilation is not to make new people just like others in the church. How can your church incorporate people into its traditions, yet be open to new ideas?
- Not only visitors and new members need assimilation. Sometimes people whose situation has changed, such as newly widowed or divorced person, someone who marries a non-member or one who has new religious beliefs, find they need to become a part of the whole in new ways. How can you recognize these people and make them feel they belong?
- Not every church member wants to be part of everything, but some churches may give the impression that members and friends are not fully apart of the church unless they participate in certain “standard” ways. How can you make certain doors are open for participation without making people feel it is mandatory?
- Our churches have people from diverse religious backgrounds. How can people be assimilated into belief systems as well as activities and worship? How might you modify worship or activities to be more broadly inclusive while maintaining the core traditions of your congregation?
- What are some of the challenges associated with assimilation of diverse traditions and cultures into the life of your church? How might they be overcome?



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE FORM

Instructions: Please take time to carefully complete this form so that your church can remain in contact with you about important information concerning your spiritual growth and development and events occurring at the church.

Class Leader's Name: _____ **Class #:** _____

PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

LAST NAME _____ FIRST NAME _____

SPOUSE'S NAME (IF MARRIED): _____ ANNIVERSARY DATE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____ APT #: _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP: _____

HOME #: _____ CELL #: _____ WORK#: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT PERSON: _____

CONTACT NUMBERS: _____

OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

What are your spiritual gifts? _____

What clubs or ministries do you currently serve in? _____

List things you like to do in your spare time (read, write, travel, etc): _____

What are your hobbies? _____

PROFESSIONAL / CAREER INFORMATION

What career field do you currently work in? (law, finance, etc) _____

What College(s) did you attend: _____

What field of study did you pursue in college? (criminal justice, education, etc) _____