

Few Black churches gain faith-based grants

By Lorinda M. Bullock
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Over the years, President George W. Bush has met with several Black ministers to garner support for his Faith-Based and Community Initiative program. But despite those meetings and photo ops, very few Black churches are actually getting the money, says a new study released this month.

Of the 750 Black churches surveyed by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, only 2.4 percent received funds from the Faith-Based Initiative grants.

According to the study, church size and the lack of resources are two of the main reasons that most Black churches — particularly churches that aren't the popular "mega churches" — don't apply or can't apply.

"Most congregations are small," said Harold Dean Trulear, an advisor on the study and a religion professor at the Howard University School of Divinity. "We kind of have a skewed perspective of what the African-American church looks like because of the ones that receive all of the coverage."

Of the 50,000 estimated Black churches in the country, Trulear said the average membership is about 100 members.

Using some of Washington, D.C.'s most powerful Black churches as an example, Trulear said, "For every Ebenezer AME Church, for every Shiloh, for every Metropolitan, there are scores of smaller congrega-

tions with part-time pastors working nine to five during the week so that they can put food on the table, and [they are] making anywhere from \$50-\$100 a week for a salary. Where does this guy have time to do the research necessary that's going to put him in the position to participate?"

More than one in four Black churches had annual revenue of less than \$100,000 and half of Black churches had revenue of less than \$250,000. Just 12 percent reported an annual revenue of more than \$1 million.

David Bositis, the author of the study, said large churches like the ones Trulear mentioned already have multiple ministers, social programs and large administrative staffs are the ones most likely to receive the funds.

"They have an infrastructure to do it. It's not like you pick up and decide one morning you want to do this and the next day you do it," Bositis said. "You have to have people who know how to write grants, who know how to administer money, who know how to follow all the rules and who know how to provide the services in a professional manner, so the churches that already did that already had those things in place."

Another reason for the low participation among Black churches is the lack of government outreach to them, said the study.

While 75 percent of the churches surveyed had some knowledge of faith-based ini-

tiatives, 66 percent did not know the rules or know how to participate and 16 percent of pastors had actually been contacted about applying. Only 11 percent of Black ministers surveyed reported applying for grants.

However, the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives said they do provide outreach programs to help churches gain access to the funding.

Alyssa J. McClenning, a spokesperson for the FBCI office did not respond to the NNPA News Service's specific question on outreach to Black churches, but answered in general terms.

"The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives has provided training to over 25,000 faith-based and community leaders to date, and we aim to continue to expand this type of education outreach for more leaders," she said.

Reaching out to smaller

churches was something Trulear thought was Bush's initial goal when he first implemented the program in 2002, to help religious groups operating social programs ranging from job assistance to health clinics also gain access to federal money.

"What we discovered, however, was in moving from idea to actual policy that we really had to start with organizations of scale because a lot of the opposition to the FBI came from large scale social service organizations that felt that the religious community was going to be competing for a limited amount of resources," he said.

Another major finding in the report showed that liberal churches in the northeast with an unfavorable view of the program were more likely to apply for and receive federal funding.

Surprisingly to researchers, they found that conser-

vative southern churches in the Bible Belt, regarded as historically strong Bush supporters, did not participate as much as the northern, liberal churches. Bositis said the reason for this could be linked to the fact that the majority denomination in the south is Southern Baptist, and statistically they are least likely to operate major social programs.

"Conservatives believe that people are supposed to help themselves. Liberals believe a lot of times life is unfair and the government and other people have to step in to help people," he explained.

"If the money was there, the liberal people have churches where they are often in poor areas where they have people they have to feed; they have sick people they have to help; they have elderly people they have to help; they have drug addicts; they have people coming out

of prison, and if the money is there, they are going to go after it. So even if they don't approve — which they were more than likely not to approve — they were still going to go after the money," Bositis said.

But Bositis said it is important to keep in mind that \$2 billion is a small amount of money for hundreds of thousands of churches to fight over, and it's hard to say if Black churches are being evenly represented and getting their fair share.

"From what I do know, I don't have a sense that Black churches are necessarily being left out. First of all, it's a small program. The White House talks about it like it's this big program that millions and billions of people are engaged in, but actually it's only 2 billion [dollars]," he said. "The federal budget is 2.3 trillion [dollars]. It's a tiny, tiny, tiny part of the budget."

Your Horoscope Says... Sept. 28-Oct. 4

ARIES

Communications will flow easily for you this week. Celebrate! Dress up and get the weekend started earlier. Social life can take your mind off heavy subjects. Don't tighten up, brighten up.

Soul Affirmation: I get joy from giving good things.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 12, 16

TAURUS

Stay positive on all fronts this week. You'll receive subtle cues this week that will confirm what you already know to be true. Act on your instincts and others will be receptive to your vibes. Even if you feel fleeting moments of uncertainty this week, go with the flow, and be a team player.

Soul Affirmation: This week is the day the Lord has made. I rejoice in it.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 26, 33

GEMINI

Your positive energy will spread feverishly among family and friends this week. Your timing is just right because your positive vibes will be the extra nudge someone needs to pull through the week. Your strength and friendship will be tested.

Soul Affirmation: Facing down challenges makes me feel good about myself.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 15, 42

CANCER

Call a family member to ask for a second opinion on something important. A different perspective will give you more options on your action plan. Use your faith to guide you through a mental maze that might stir up confusion.

Soul Affirmation: I smile and trust in the powers beyond myself.

Lucky Numbers: 38, 50, 52

LEO

Give yourself a break this week! You've been going at full speed and you need to shift down to a lower gear. Time is a luxury and it will be on your side this week. Kick off your shoes, enjoy a long afternoon nap, or curl up with a good book that you've been meaning to read.

Soul Affirmation: I let the outer world and inner world change places this week

Lucky Numbers: 27, 29, 45

VIRGO

This week remember to pamper yourself by giving. To give with no expectation of receiving in return is truly a luxury of the joy-filled spirit. The act of giving has a reciprocal effect on those that it touches. So when you share your gifts, know that as you do, you are lavishing not only others but also yourself.

Soul Affirmation: Giving is a luxury that a rich spirit can afford.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 27, 32

LIBRA

Romance, friendship, family ties — no matter what you call it — love is, indeed, your special blessing this week. Allow yourself to show love and to be loved. Bless someone by sharing your love, and you will be blessed in return.

Soul Affirmation: Giving love is finding love.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 13, 19

SCORPIO

You're not usually a gambler but luck is with you as never before in recent months. You have the Midas touch this week. Buy a lottery ticket or make a wager. Gamble on love if you have that option handy. You can't miss if you follow your instincts.

Soul Affirmation: My hunches pay all day this week.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 24, 37

SAGITTARIUS

Your agreement with co-workers should improve as you take steps to strengthen emotional connections. Keeping things to yourself will not pay off for you this week. Love waits for you if you ask. A message from a distant source contains a clue.

Soul Affirmation: Communication is a skeleton key that fits many doors.

Lucky Numbers: 48, 51, 54

CAPRICORN

Dealing with smaller issues is the order of the week. Your soul vibrations will not attune easily to lofty subjects, long-ranged plans and the other aspects of the bigger picture. Attention to details, though, will give a sense of accomplishment.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy looking at the road of life sweeping just in front of me.

Lucky Numbers: 33, 49, 51

AQUARIUS

Matters relating to health need attention. Prevention is more valuable than cure. Rest and eat well this week. Your stress will be lower by knowing that you do not have to fix a relationship that has gone sour. Feel your independence and ability to travel alone.

Soul Affirmation: People love me, yes they do.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 22, 40

PISCES

Use better judgment with regard to financial matters. Stop rationalizing. Money is important. Do something about the fact that you might find yourself broke more often than you wish. Continuing to deny it will delay doing something about it.

Soul Affirmation: I find comfort in the familiar.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 14, 19



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