

Black Church Matters: Strengthening the Future of the Black Church

Investing in leaders so they can continue to serve as catalysts for faith, transformation, and hope.



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The Black Church has long been one of the most transformative institutions in American history. It has served not only as a place of worship but also as a center for education, advocacy, leadership development, and community care. From the Civil Rights Movement to present-day efforts for justice and equity, the Black Church has shaped culture, strengthened families, and sustained communities through faith and resilience.

Yet today, many Black churches face new and complex challenges — shifting demographics, leadership fatigue, declining participation, and increased social needs within the communities they serve. While the mission of the church remains sacred and vital, the context in which it operates has evolved.

“Recognizing both the legacy and the future of the Black Church, SBC21 launched the Black Church Matters Initiative — a leadership development effort designed to equip pastors and ministry leaders with the tools, strategies, and support needed to strengthen their congregations.”

What Is the Black Church Matters Initiative?

The Black Church Matters Initiative is designed to strengthen Black pastors and congregational leaders so they can lead thriving, community-centered ministries that remain spiritually grounded while responding to the evolving needs of their communities.

The initiative provides leaders with opportunities to strengthen leadership capacity, develop strategic ministry plans, engage their communities more effectively, prioritize emotional and spiritual well-being, and connect with peers and thought leaders across the country. Rather than offering one-size-fits-all solutions, Black Church Matters recognizes that each congregation has its own history, calling, and context — creating learning environments where leaders can reflect, collaborate, and implement strategies tailored to their communities.

<p>PROGRAM ONE</p> <p>Maximum Impact</p> <p>From vision to ministry action — strategic planning, peer learning, and coaching support to translate vision into measurable change.</p>	<p>PROGRAM TWO</p> <p>Leadership Forward</p> <p>Ongoing leadership development through lunch-and-learns, webinars, and conversations with experienced ministry leaders.</p>	<p>PROGRAM THREE</p> <p>Emotional Wellness</p> <p>Supporting the whole leader — spiritually, emotionally, and relationally — to ensure resilience and longevity in ministry.</p>
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Maximum Impact: From Vision to Ministry Action

The Maximum Impact Program supports pastors and ministry leaders as they develop practical ministry action plans that deepen the church’s connection to the community. Participants engage in a structured learning experience that includes strategic planning, peer learning, and coaching support. Through this process, leaders explore how their congregations can live out their mission in tangible ways that address real needs within their communities.

Maximum Impact encourages leaders to ask critical questions: How is our church responding to the needs of our community? What unique mission has God given our congregation in this season? How can we align discipleship, justice, and community transformation? By focusing on implementation, Maximum Impact helps leaders translate vision into action and build ministries that create measurable and meaningful change.

Leadership Forward: Developing Leaders for the Next Season

While Maximum Impact focuses on strategic ministry planning, Leadership Forward emphasizes ongoing leadership development and learning. Leadership Forward provides opportunities for pastors and ministry leaders to grow through experiences such as lunch and learn leadership sessions, webinars and educational workshops, conversations with experienced ministry leaders, and networking opportunities with peers and denominational partners.

These gatherings foster a learning community where leaders can share ideas, strengthen their leadership practices, and remain connected to emerging conversations in ministry and community engagement.

Leadership Forward recognizes that effective leadership requires continuous growth, reflection, and collaboration.

Emotional Wellness: Supporting the Well-Being of Ministry Leaders

In addition to strategy and leadership development, the Black Church Matters Initiative recognizes the importance of emotional and spiritual wellness for pastors and ministry leaders. Ministry leaders often carry immense responsibility as spiritual guides, community advocates, counselors, and administrators. Without intentional support, this work can lead to burnout and emotional fatigue.

Through wellness-focused gatherings, conversations, and learning opportunities, Emotional Wellness encourages leaders to prioritize rest and renewal, develop healthy emotional practices, address stress and burnout, and build sustainable rhythms for ministry and life. By supporting the whole leader, the initiative helps ensure that pastors and ministry leaders can lead with resilience and longevity.

“When pastors are supported, congregations flourish. When congregations flourish, communities are strengthened. And that is why Black Church Matters.”

Why This Work Matters

The Black Church continues to be one of the most trusted institutions in Black communities. It remains a place where faith is nurtured, justice is pursued, and communities are strengthened. However, many congregations are navigating significant shifts — changing community demographics, evolving ministry models, and increased community needs. Supporting the leaders who guide these congregations is essential to the future vitality of the Black Church.

The Black Church Matters Initiative exists to invest in those leaders so they can continue to serve as catalysts for faith, transformation, and hope. Through the initiative, SBC21 is helping pastors and ministry leaders clarify their vision, strengthen their leadership, and sustain their well-being — because the future of the Black Church will be shaped by leaders who are deeply rooted in faith, committed to justice, and equipped to lead with wisdom and resilience.

*Because when pastors are supported, congregations flourish.
When congregations flourish, communities are strengthened.*