

Voices: Reflections on a historic joint worship service

April 3, 2024

On March 17, two churches [gathered to worship](#) alongside each other for the first time.

On its own, this may not seem that significant—until you know the history.

Historically, Calvary Baptist Church is a mostly white church in Port Arthur. Greater Faith International Ministries is a mostly African American and new church plant.

I am the pastor of Calvary Baptist and have been here a little more than five years. Since Day One, I have been seeking ways to unite our community under the banner of Christ. It has been harder than I imagined. I found out Port Arthur has gone through some very tough times that have left a lot of hurt in its wake.

I met Overseer and Pastor Kevin Domingo of Greater Faith International Ministries a few years back, and we developed a close friendship. The idea of bringing our churches together for worship began to grow as we learned about each other and developed a trust as brothers in Christ. It is an amazing relationship.

What follows is our discussion about our shared worship event.

Historical background and significance

Historically, this was a first to my (Overseer Domingo's) knowledge and on

the scale it was done to have happened in our area. Those familiar with the history of our area informed me we were about to make history in that area for the first time.

A predominantly Caucasian Baptist church and a predominantly African American nondenominational church worshipped together under the same roof in this region of Texas for the first time.

It was something sought after by others but had not been done prior to our meeting and planning and had not come to fruition. We believe this is what heaven will look like, which made it easy for us not to just toss around the idea, but to bring it to pass.

It was an opportunity to go against the grain of culture and present to the world the reality, not only can we coexist and bring different worship and culture under the same roof and worship the same God, but we can cause it to be infectious in our society in this day and time to bring glory and honor to our heavenly Father.

Because of the mutual love and respect we—Overseer Domingo and Pastor Blake—share, our congregations were ready for such an event and didn't have any concerns going into the service.

What it was like

While different, the clash of styles of worship was met with open arms. Although unfamiliar in some cases, they were still welcomed by both congregations.

Everyone was engaged and into the service. It was great, a true testament to both leaders who envisioned something bigger than themselves.

It was more of a blessing than we both could have imagined. It put to rest all our prohibitions and showed us—through fellowship, worship and love

for one another—that when God’s plan is at the forefront of our priorities, it is nothing we cannot accomplish together.

It was a life-changing experience. I (Overseer Domingo) and Greater Faith International Ministries cannot wait until the next time we can come together as one body in Christ.

Gratitude



Blake Alling, lead pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Port Arthur. (Courtesy photo)

I (Blake) thank Overseer Domingo for the honor of allowing us to worship with his church. It truly was an honor because they easily could have said, ‘No,’ and we would have understood. His community has been hurt in the past, and for people to look beyond the hurt and worship with us truly was a God-movement.

Most white churches in Port Arthur have struggled with racism. We could ignore it and expect those affected to move on, but that is not as easy as it

sounds. We needed to acknowledge the hurt of the past and be aware of the pain many in our community still deal with every day.

The only concern I (Blake) had was if everyone in our congregations would embrace this service as we—their pastors—had. And they did. We saw the evidence of God moving in the room as we worshipped together. That is a testament to our friendship and our mutual desire to see Christ high and lifted up in our city.

Like Overseer Domingo, I cannot wait until we do this again. My heart already has been yearning for this kind of worship again. I was shaken to my soul by the presence of God in this place. I cannot thank my friend Kevin enough for sharing this time with me.

Blake Alling is lead pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in the Port Acres area of Port Arthur. Kevin Domingo is overseer and pastor of Greater Faith International Ministries in Port Arthur. The views expressed in this opinion article are those of the authors.