

**Where Do We Go From Here?**  
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC  
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.  
January 3, 2021

Diaspora XLII – The Church Scattered, Forty-second Sunday

Text:           Matthew 9:37, 38  
                  Matthew 28:18-20

Purpose:        The commissioning of a new pastor to serve a congregation, is an important chapter in the life of the pastor as well as the congregation. It is the selection of a person that has answered the call to enter into the harvest field for the Lord to win lost souls. It is also an affirmation from the congregation that this person can help the congregation fulfill their purpose to nurture believers in the community and help advance the Great Commission.

Four expectant fathers were in a Minnesota hospital waiting room while their wives were in labor. The nurse comes in and tells the first man, "Congratulations, you're the father of twins." "What a coincidence!" the man exclaims. "I work for the Minnesota Twins baseball team!"

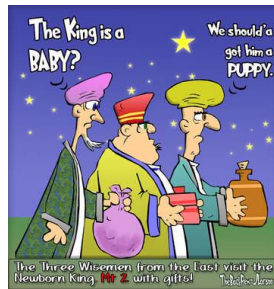


The nurse returns a short while later and tells the second man, "You are the father of triplets." "Wow, what a coincidence!" he replies. "I work for the 3M Corporation."

When the nurse comes again, she tells the third man that his wife has given birth to quadruplets. "Another coincidence!" he tells her. "I work for the Four Seasons Hotel!"

At this point, the fourth guy faints. When he comes to, the others ask him what was wrong. He moans, "I work for Seven-Eleven!"<sup>1</sup>

Over the past few weeks, we have heard the story of Christmas. We have shared the various scriptures of how Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem and laid the baby Jesus in a manger. Today several of our songs in our worship service remind us the Maji, or Wise Men, from the East brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the Christ child. There are numerous twists and turns in the story of Jesus' birth. So many people played an important role. Being divinely warned in a dream, Mary and Joseph quickly relocated to Egypt after the Wise Men delivered their gifts so they would escape the murderous wrath of King Herod.



As much as I love Christmas, I also have a sense of relief that we can go back to the "ordinary" routines of life. With the turning of the calendar page, we enter into a year of uncertainty. As we all can attest, 2020 has been filled with many challenges. It is quite an understatement to say it was a year of unprecedented changes. These changes have impacted the church as well.

We are inclined to make New Year's Resolutions around this time of year to help make our life better – I will lose weight – I will exercise more – I will visit my family more frequently – I will get a new job – I will get married this year – I will attend church more frequently ---- the list goes on.



This year, I begin a new chapter in my life as your 15<sup>th</sup> Pastor. Spilman also is beginning a new chapter in its life.

I know with the installation of a new Pastor, there are always hundreds of questions that each person asks themselves.



When a church votes a new pastor in, many times the person called is unfamiliar to the congregation. When those people are called under those circumstances, the church members want to know, "Who will you be to us?" "What can we expect from you?" "What do you want from us as members?" The unique situation about me becoming your Pastor is that I have been here for over two years serving among you. We have dated a long time! I know you and you know me. Hopefully any lingering questions you may have about me have already been answered.

Because we have a few new people that have joined us recently, I wanted to take some time this morning to share some of my story with you. I share this with you this morning because as MY story is shared with you, and Spilman shares YOUR story with me, it will become OUR

<sup>1</sup> Mike's Funnies – December 3, 2020 – A Baby Funny

story as we move forward in ministry and service in the years to come.

It seems that any journey begins with the first step. For me, that first step of faith began in First Baptist Church of Drakes Branch, Virginia. I cannot remember the revival pastor's name, the topic he chose to speak about, or any other key events that others may deem important. That night God began to work in the heart of a 9-year-old boy through the prior influence of his parents, pastor, and Sunday school teachers.



One of the things I can remember was that God impressed upon me that night that if I did not personally ask Jesus to be MY Savior, then I was eternally separated from Him. It was a very deliberate decision to ask Jesus to be my Savior. The scene of the Jordan River painted on the back wall of the churches baptismal still lingers in my memory today.

Just as a young boy grows, so did my faith and knowledge of who I was in Christ. We moved to Raleigh, North Carolina and joined Trinity Baptist Church when I was 12 years old. During this time, I participated in Bible drills, learned the parables of Jesus, went on youth trips to Florida, and participated in church life as a teenager. All of these added to the rings of my growing faith.

While at Mars Hill College, I knew God was still at work in my life but was unsure of which direction He would lead me. It was there among the hills of Mars Hill that I met Jo Anne Sanderson, who later became



my wife in 1984. Once we were married, we settled in Raleigh and joined First Baptist Church in Raleigh.

I could see in Jo Anne's life that God had definitely called her to serve in some capacity. We looked at Southeastern and Duke but we both felt that neither were the right place. As for myself, I felt I needed to grow where I was planted. We sat and soaked up the preaching of Dr. John Lewis week after week. After taking the discipleship program *Masterlife* for six months, and then teaching it for the next six months, we felt God leading us into the direction of ministry to children. In 1987 we accepted a position at the North Carolina Baptist Children's Home located at Kennedy Home in Kinston, North Carolina.

That "still small voice of God" sometimes is mighty small at times. Sometimes you wonder, "Was that God that led me here or was that just my imagination?" After six months of service there, we were sure our time was complete. Jo Anne and I were "burned out." Six days a week, 24 hours a day took its toll on both of us.

My determination to seek my place of service was not diminished, even though Kennedy Home did not materialize as we had anticipated. We began interpreting for the deaf at First Baptist Church in Kinston even before we transferred our letter of membership. I felt that I could serve God through being a good pew sitting, tithe giving, yes voting (most of the time) member of the Church.

Over the 10 years at First Baptist Church in Kinston, I served on numerous committees. I served as a Deacon, Brotherhood Director,



Deaf interpreter, Sunday School teacher, an Usher, and established and taught Children's Church for K-2 for two years. I served on the Evangelism Committee, Lord's Supper Committee, Library Committee, Church Council, and the Nominating Committee. As you can see, I was involved. I was there when the doors were open -- Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night. I had "paid my dues".

Yet there was a growing awareness in my heart that I should be doing more. I saw with my own eyes in 1991, during a trip to the Soviet Union through the International Bible Society, that God is bigger than the Southern Baptist Convention.

Under the direction of the minister of education and Jo Anne as the Sunday School Director, we began a young couples' class that met in the Church parlor. You know the kind of parlor that has furniture in it that even your grandmother would not even sit upon. The framed painting, the polished silver coffee set, etc.... You have the picture. We grew the class from three couples to almost 18 members in 6 months. In retrospect, I was trying to change people's lives, while others were trying to preserve their heritage and legacy. This contrast resulted in a conflict that neither the pastor or the chairman of the deacons was equipped to resolve. We were not going to split a church, so we resigned from everything and began to seek "for a land where God would show us."

In our bible study by T.W. Hunt Experiencing God, it says to find where God is at work and join Him there. I finally learned that serving Christ is not about "paying our dues."

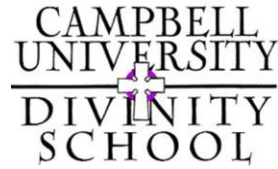
I began searching to see where God was at work and where His Spirit was present in worship. I found the presence of God and His word preached at Tanglewood Church of God in Kinston. God was there, and I joined June of 1998.

Having to commute to Wilson every day to work, I soaked up the teaching of Dr. David Jeremiah. During that time, I learned about the book of Revelation, the core values of the church, how to live according to Jesus, worship, prayer, David, Daniel, and many other topics. I taught a group of deaf people from First Baptist in my home every Friday night on the topic of Revelation for a year. I listened to Dr. J. Vernon McGee's daily Bible teaching as often as I can. I still do today.

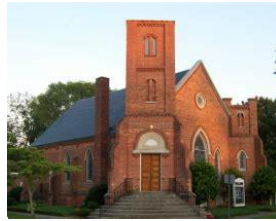
Over the years, reading has become my passion. If you have seen the number of books I have, you would agree. The authors I have recently read include: Calvin Miller, Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins series on the tribulation, Gary Chapman, Joseph M. Stowell, C. Peter Wagner, Max Lucado, Corrie Ten Boom, Hugh Ross, T. W. Hunt, Watchman Nee, Henri Nouwen, Billy Graham, and many, many more.

God was preparing me for a ministry that I did not even know. In leaving First Baptist Church and joining Tanglewood Church of God, I broke a long-standing Baptist tradition in my family. Yet, I felt compelled to go where God was at work. I wanted to cast my lot in with those that were making a difference. I have tried all of my life to help those around me to grow into what God would have them to be.

In 1999, I enrolled as a student at Campbell University Divinity School and completed my Master of Divinity degree in 2004. While there, I met so many people that are still influential in my life, like those you heard earlier – Dr. Nate Leonard, Alta Whitt, Dr. Tim Lipp, Dr. Mike Cogdill, Dr. Glen Jonas, and Dr. Larry Hovis through CBF of North Carolina. My years at Campbell were foundational in my growth as a student of God’s word and a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.



In 2001 I accepted the Pastorate at Fremont Missionary Baptist Church where I served for 16 years. While at Fremont, in October 2004, my wife, Jo Ann died after a long courageous battle with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. In May 2006, I married Sharon Rouse who has been such a blessing in my life. It is hard to believe it has been almost 15 years. I am a twice blessed man.



In 2007 I returned to Campbell and enrolled in their Doctor of Ministry program. I completed that degree in 2010. Out of that course of study, I was able to begin a non-profit focused on Released Time Religious Education. Sadly, that vision was not able to get off the ground. I also opened a coffee shop in downtown Fremont where I ministered to so many people over a period of almost two years. As difficult lessons are often learned, I have found sometimes the Lord closes doors in your life so you can begin a new chapter. Our time of ministry in Fremont closed in 2017.

It was during the time after I left Fremont, I was invited to fill in for Spilman’s Pastor Dan Cromer. This church welcomed us and nurtured us in such a way that we felt compelled to join here in December 2017. We found God at work here and wanted to be a part of the good work and people of Spilman. Over these past three years, we have grieved together and worked closely together – two of these years have been as your interim. Today, I thank God that the people of Spilman have asked me to serve Spilman in a more permanent capacity.

I realize that this Church has been on a journey for a long time. Many wonderful ministries have happened and there have been challenges along the way. I do not know of a single church or pastor that is perfect. What I do know is if we continue to focus on the past – I am speaking to myself as well as Spilman – we cannot seek to do what God would have us to do today and tomorrow. I do know this, TOGETHER we can find out exactly what God would have us to do in this community and pursue it with all our hearts.



The world is desperately seeking the answer to fill the void in their lives. There is probably more opportunity for ministry after we have had a year like 2020 than ever before. People are lonely, hurting, grieving, addicted, and need Jesus Christ in their life. We need to realize that apart from Christ that there is no hope. There is no salvation apart from Christ. What are we going to do about it?

Our scripture reading today is our mission statement from Christ. The fields are white unto harvest. We need to make disciples of others and send them into the world to make a difference.

Campbell University Divinity School adopted a mission statement and I would like it to be reflected in the type of ministry I want to exhibit here at Spilman.



### **Christ Centered Relationships**

- In all my relationships I want to represent Christ.
- In all my relationships, I want to keep God first, my wife second, my family third, and the church fourth. If I am to be the person I am called to be, keeping these four areas in balance is one of the keys to faithfully serving this church.

### **Bible Based**

- Sunday morning                      Proclaim the Word
- Wednesday nights                Teach the Word
- Throughout the week            Live the Word

### **Ministry Focused**

- Call each person out of their comfort zone to become who God calls them to become.
- Help individuals identify their spiritual gifts and put them to work in the ministries that match their gifts.

- Help each person realize they are a minister of the gospel with a God chosen task for them to accomplish.

All of my life I have tried to be a cheerleader, an encourager, a peacemaker, and a mediator. The Lord has confirmed to me that this is the right decision to be here at Spilman Memorial Baptist Church.

I am fully committed to Christ.  
I am fully committed to all of God's word.  
And now I wish to be fully ministry-focused.

God began a work in my life almost 50 years ago at Drakes Branch, Virginia. God began a work in this community almost 68 years ago known as Spilman Memorial Baptist Church. Now our journeys are on the same path. May God bless our journey together, as we look to Him for guidance, support, nurture, and blessings.



**LET US PRAY**