

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church
601 Madison Avenue
Kinston, NC 28501

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SEPTEMBER 2020
TIE NEWSLETTER

Too Many Pastors are Falling on their Own Swords By Jakob Topper – August 18, 2020

This article was edited to fit the available space. The article can be read in its entirety at:

<https://baptistnews.com/article/too-many-pastors-are-falling-on-their-own-swords/>

“Well, I guess what I’m trying to say is that I’ve been imagining killing myself,” the pastor said.

I was on a Zoom call recently with 10 pastors across three denominations, when one of the participants shared a struggle with suicidal thoughts in these challenging days. By the time the meeting concluded, four of the 10 had found the courage to admit their own suicidal ideations.

One pastor shared the heartbreaking story of going back to church too early and losing a beloved church member to COVID-19. Another shared how congregants were daily emailing him with threats to leave the church if they didn’t reopen immediately — and withholding their tithes until then. One pastor was fired. Another pastor was forced to lay off half the church’s staff members because so many of the church’s congregants lost their jobs and are unable to give right now.

“Leading anxious congregations amidst a pandemic, a hyper-partisan culture, a civil rights movement, and an upcoming election is destroying the lives of our pastors. Literally.”

Church always has been a place where people can act foolish with little consequence — where people have the space to act out toward clergy in ways that aren’t safe to do toward their bosses or their spouses. Being a pastor never has been easy, but this is a new level of hell that pastors are living.

If you’re a congregant reading this, here’s some advice:

First, accept the fact that your church is not The Church. Second, accept that your pastor is a shepherd, not The Shepherd. Third, pray for your pastor. Fourth, for the next six months, commit to staying and being the best church member you can be. Fifth, advocate for your pastor’s mental health.

If you’re a pastor reading this, I have advice for you too:

First, get a counselor. Second, be honest with your primary care physician about anxiety and depression. Third, do less. Fourth, practice friendship. Fifth, lean on your peers.

No one can support a pastor quite like another pastor. Ask a few trusted peers to be in a small peer group that carries each other’s pandemic burdens for the next six months. And then tell them the truth, pray for each other fervently and often, and hold each other accountable for their taking care of mental health. When my other pastor friends ask me if I’ve made an appointment with my counselor yet, then I feel compelled to do so in a way that I don’t otherwise feel.

You may think you don’t have any more room to carry anyone else’s burden, and that’s true, but I’d wager you will find the burden is actually lessened when shared with competent companions who are on the same journey.

Jakob Topper serves as pastor of NorthHaven Baptist Church in Norman, Okla.

THE TIE

*Connecting you with the body of Christ at
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church*

SEPTEMBER 2020

CHURCH STAFF

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr., Interim Pastor
Michell Sutton Eguez—Administrative Assistant
Clay Whittington, Director of Music and Organist
Michael and Vance Aldridge, Custodians
Michelle Sutton, Finance Assistant



The Watermelon Story

One of my fondest memories of working on my grandfather’s farm during the summer was the time I slipped off behind the barn to eat one of his prized watermelons. We would frequently walk through the field and check the golden blossoms and watch them grow almost daily. We would thump them to see if they were ripe. I cannot quite explain the “right” sound it makes when it is ripe, but you know it when you hear it. Many people have their special way of making sure their selection is “just right.” Some look at the stem, the coloring on the bottom, or they may even use a broom straw to determine if it is ripe.

Summer has always been a time for me to enjoy watermelon. This year, I have been picking up a weekly box of vegetables from a farmer in Snow Hill. Last week was our last box for the season. As a treat he gave me two different varieties of small round watermelons. They tasted slightly different but both were delicious.

Years ago, while we were in Fremont, we would host a children’s party that centered on the theme of watermelon. If you try hard enough, you can make a scriptural application to most of the things in life. During that party, I taught them the watermelon story that I had learned from Child Evangelism Fellowship.

When a watermelon begins to grow, the first thing you notice is the golden yellow flower. This golden blossom reminds me of our home in heaven and the streets paved of gold. Jesus told us in the Bible that he has gone to prepare a place for us to live (John 14:2). This is a place prepared for holy perfect people.

Once the watermelon is “right,” you are ready to eat it. What is the first thing you see when you cut into it? It is all those annoying black seeds. (I know they make some seedless watermelons now!) Those black seeds remind us that sin is present in our life. The Bible says, “*All have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory.*” (Romans 3:23) Since we are sinners, and we are not holy, how will we ever be able to enter the holy, perfect place prepared by God?



That is where the red part of the watermelon comes in. This reminds us of the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for our sins. It was this blood shed at Calvary almost 2000 years ago that cleanses us from our sin. If we confess our sins, Jesus will forgive us of our sins. (1 John 1:7) When we believe, we are adopted into the family of God.

The white portion of the watermelon reminds us that when we ask Jesus to forgive us, our sins that once were black and awful, are now made white as snow (Psalms 51:7). It is not our goodness or our works that allow us to call heaven our home; it is because of what Christ has done on our behalf. We are made perfect in Christ.

The green part of the watermelon reminds us that we need to study and learn God’s word. We can grow in our knowledge of the things of God. When we hide God’s word in our heart, it becomes as a lamp to guide our path in life (Psalm 119:105).

As you enjoy your watermelon this summer, meditate on what Christ has done for everyone that calls upon His name. Often when I sit down to eat some watermelon, I think of my grandfather and those events centered around watermelon and smile. Remember, this world may seem sweet, but the best is yet to be!



DR. H. POWELL DEW, JR.

COVID -19 Conversations

We all need a good laugh at times like this! I copied this from Facebook this week and wanted to share it with you!

Everyone PLEASE be careful because people are going crazy from being locked down at home!

I was just talking about this with the microwave and the toaster while drinking my coffee, and we all agreed that things are getting bad.

I didn't mention any of this to the washing machine, because she puts a different spin on EVERYTHING!! Certainly, couldn't share with the fridge, because he's been acting cold and distant!

In the end, the iron straightened me out! She said the situation isn't all that pressing and all the wrinkles will soon get ironed out!

The vacuum, however, was very unsympathetic...told me to just suck it up buttercup!

But the fan was VERY optimistic and gave me hope that it will all blow over soon!

The toilet looked a bit flushed but didn't say anything when I asked its opinion.

The front door said I was becoming unhinged and the doorknob told me to get a grip!!

You can just about guess what the curtains told me: they told me to "pull myself together!"

We will survive!! #alonetogether2020

Update from Clay Whittington

"No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that rock I'm clinging. Since love is lord of Heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?"

These words are from the American folksong, *How Can I Keep from Singing*, originally composed as a hymn by American Baptist minister Robert Lowry. As a musician, I'm not considered an "essential employee," so this pandemic has rendered my performance calendar empty outside of my duties at Spilman Memorial. The choir is not rehearsing due to the dangers of singing in close proximity to others. As you've most likely seen and heard, I come in to an empty church building during the week to record the music for Sunday morning. I wrestle with doing 50+ takes of one hymn to get it "just right." When I have mentioned that to others, I typically hear, "you're the only one who knows you messed up." While I certainly appreciate the sentiment and fully understand what you're saying, I know I messed up and can do much better. The act of worship requires me to offer the very best I have. My grandmother used to equate getting dressed up for church with getting dressed up to meet the President. If I were to meet the President today, I would make every effort to make sure my tie is on straight, my shirt is pressed, and my jacket is freshly cleaned. Every Sunday morning, we worship the One who is MOST worthy of praise, so I make sure my tie is straight, my shirt is pressed, my jacket is freshly cleaned, and I offer the absolute best of my musical abilities and the best of who I am, even if it takes rolling the camera for 5 hours just to get 20 minutes of music. How can I keep from singing? I can't. I will sing my way through this pandemic until the Lord Himself calls me home. If you're watching our services from home, I encourage you to follow along in the bulletin you receive in the mail (also available on the website) and SING!

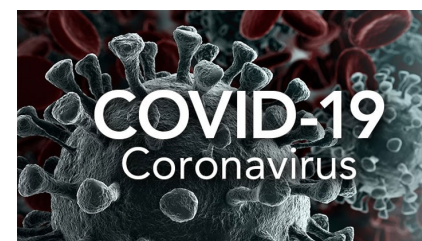
Update from Danny Rice Diaconate Chair

I would like to thank our deacons for their continued periodic contact with their assigned families during the past few months.

We are now in the deacon / trustee election process. Ballots were mailed out to all resident members on August 18th. Ballots need to be returned to the church by September 6th.

We would like to thank Larry Williams, Shag Carlyle, and Danny Rice for their service on the diaconate over the past three years. We would also like to thank Doug Blizzard and Jim Barlow for their service as trustees.

Worship Services at Spilman Memorial Baptist Church



The church will continue with weekly mailings and Facebook Live on Sunday morning at 10:30.

The sanctuary will be open on Sunday mornings for those individuals that feel comfortable coming back to church. We do ask if you are experiencing any illness that may be flu like, to please stay home.

Please enter the sanctuary on Sunday morning through the Madison Avenue entrance. The rest of the buildings and doors will be locked and off limits to members.

We will continue to offer masks, hand sanitizer, and bulletins for those attending.

We do request those attending to sit at least six feet from each other and continue to practice social distancing guidelines while at church.

Offering will be collected as people enter or exit the building. We will not be passing the plate. Hymnals and Bibles have been removed from the pews. Please use the worship bulletin for the music and scripture readings.

The sanctuary will be cleaned each week before the Sunday morning worship service.

It may take some more time before we can resume Sunday school, Wednesday night prayer meeting and Bible Study.

No timetable has been set for resuming the choir.

Frances Keel Deacon of the Month



Frances and her husband Tom, moved from Marietta, GA. to Kinston in 1997. She has a son, Edward and a daughter, Lesley. Tom passed away in Oct. 2009.

Frances has actively participated in worship services since 2003, and became a member of Spilman in 2015. She now serves as a Deacon and is a part of the Bereavement Committee.

Church Conference September 16, 2020—6:00 PM

It has been months since we have scheduled a church conference due to the coronavirus pandemic. For those able to attend, we will be presenting the usual reports along with the Nominating Committee recommendations for the upcoming church year.

A Word from Donna Keith

I'm going to try to be positive! Our coronavirus numbers are still up in Lenoir County. The number of hospitalized patients at UNC Lenoir hospital is currently stable. We have made progress in treating the virus. We do not have rapid testing kits available so we still have to wait 1-3 days to get the test results. North Carolina is doing a better job than other states due to our state requiring people to wear a mask. I still want to emphasis people still need to **wear your mask, wash your hands** and **continue social distancing**.

We have recently begun allowing visitors in the hospital. It is currently limited to one visitor per patient for their hospital stay. Approved visitors will be screened, given a special wrist band to wear, and they will be required to wear a mask. The visitor must be at least 18 years old. This is progress! We now have our Chaplain services meeting with patients and staff which is great news! Please continue to keep our healthcare workers in your prayers!

Spilman 2020 – Facts and Figures	July 2020	Year-to-Date
General Budget Monthly Needs	\$22,462.58	\$157,328.06
General Offerings Received	\$15,786.00	\$143,245.00
Designated Offerings Received	\$2,095.00	\$9,655.00
Total Offerings Received	\$17,881.00	\$152,900.00
Total General Budget Expenses	\$17,785.29	\$121,206.86
Budget Giving was Over (Under) Budget by:	(\$6,676.58)	(\$13,993.06)
Net Budget Giving vs. Budget Exp.	(\$1,999.29)	\$22,038.14



2020 BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 2 Leon Deans, Jr. | 14 Jimmy Barlow |
| 6 Mary Ellen Collins | 14 Jeff Ellis |
| 8 Cleon Lincke | 20 Aveeno Grant |
| 8 Brooks Owens | 23 Faye Sullivan |
| 10 John Lewis Wilkins | 26 Berry Creech Pittman |
| 11 Gerald Aman | 27 Sheryl Ellis |
| 13 Nancy Bennett | 28 Jimmy Powers |
| 13 Ella Wade | 30 Sandra Chaney Drum |