

Let Me Sum Up Part 3

I'm starting to think the actual retirement won't be as difficult as trying to decide what to say in these final messages. Several times in the past I have shared with you some of the history of our church. Most of you know my family moved to Tulsa in the summer of 1967 and we began attending this church. The congregation moved into this facility just a few months after we arrived in the fall of 67. It never entered my mind that less than nine years later I would be married to my wonderful wife Paula whom I met here as a teenager and we would be asked to serve as the youth pastors of our home church and then as associates and for the last 38 years as pastors. It has been our distinct honor and privilege to serve this wonderful church, this wonderful congregation and community all of these years.

I've shared our church history at various times. Dale Wilkerson has been researching the early days of Carbondale and archiving and preserving much of our history. If you have information about or pictures of any of the early pastors, especially from 1933 to 1955, Bro. Hill through Bro. Helvey, he would love to talk with you.

The Assemblies of God was born in the fires of a Pentecostal outpouring at the turn of the last century. We believed the God of the bible was still saving, healing, working miracles, changing lives, speaking to and revealing himself to people, still empowering people to live holy lives, to take the good news that God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him would not perish but would have eternal life.

The Pentecostal message was good news to the hard working folks of the Westside. Believers at Red Fork formed a group and applied for affiliation with the Assemblies of God. About the same time a group of believers in the Carbondale Community Church were encouraged by their pastor to seek a deeper experience with God and from stories I heard, at what they called a brush arbor built just a few blocks from here, they received the Pentecostal experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The two groups joined together and became Carbondale Assembly of God. 90 years later, we are still meeting, still worshiping, still announcing the good news that Jesus saves, heals, baptizes in the Holy Spirit and is coming again.

In the 90 year existence of our church there have been 14 pastors, however, in the last 68 years there have only been three. The next pastor will probably only know one of the 14 names on the list: mine. Here is a list of the 14 pastors who have served in the past 90 years.

1933 - Rev. F.A. Hill (Red Fork Group)
 1934 - Rev. Earl Davis (Carbondale Group)
 1934 - Rev. B. H Caudle (Carbondale Assembly of God)
 1935 - Rev. L. R. Lynch
 1936 - Rev. H. T. Owens
 1939 - Rev. F. C. Cornell
 1943 - Rev. George Newby
 1946 - Rev. J. C. Minor
 1947 - Rev. Eric Johnson
 1948 - Rev. R. M Crenshaw
 1950 - Rev. R. G. Helvey
 1956 - Rev. H. D. Pieratt
 1975 - Rev. J. L. McQueen
 1985 - Rev. Phil Taylor

I had the privilege of knowing the widows of three of the early pastors: Sis. Lynch, Sis. Owens and Sis. Helvey. I knew Bro. Cornell, Bro. Pieratt and of course Bro. McQueen and I met Bro. Johnson. Each of these pastors brought unique gifts, talents and abilities to the church. All of these pastors helped contribute to what I've called the spiritual dna of our church.

Our Spiritual DNA

A pioneer spirit, full of faith.

Think of the challenge of starting a church in the middle of the Great Depression. Unemployment was at 22% in 1934. It had actually decreased to 22%. It was the Dustbowl in Oklahoma. 35 million acres of farmland destroyed with 225 million acres in danger from severe drought. The summer of 34 was the hottest on record in OK, reaching 117. And in this community of Carbondale, a group of people began renting space over the drugstore, doing their best to pay a \$2 utility bill and give a little offering to a pastor. The pastors and the people lived by faith and believed by faith the Lord would build his church – and he did.

In 1936, acting in faith and under the leadership of Pastor H.T.Owens, the church borrowed \$1400 to purchase land and built a building at the corner of West 48th and South 31st W. Ave. Our first permanent home. In spite of difficult economic times, church members pledged \$52.50 per month to repay the loan. After multiple additions and remodels, 87 years later that building is still standing and a congregation of Jesus' followers are meeting there this morning, worshipping the Lord.

The pastors of the 1930's were pioneers. There was risk in preaching this Pentecostal message. Often looked down upon, mocked and called "holy rollers", Sis. Owens told me about having rotten tomatoes thrown at them while they were preaching, and worse. These men and

women put their lives and livelihoods on the line; they put their houses up as collateral to secure the money to build our church. They worked and sacrificed to pay off the note and that pioneer spirit, that bold faith to build when God said to build, even in the midst of the Great Depression, in economic hardship, that is part of our dna. It's part of our history and part of who we are and who we must always be. We did it again in 67, building and moving to this property. We did it after the tornado, rebuilding debt free, we did it again with the last remodel and addition. We have to be willing to risk, to build, to obey the Lord, willing to risk and accept change, to try new things, to grow, to plant, to expand, regardless of the cost. Don't be afraid to step out in faith as a pioneer. You will have to move in faith again in this transition. Trust and obey. It's who we are.

Part of our spiritual dna is our **Commitment to the Word of God**. We've been blessed to have pastors that preached and taught the word of God and not their opinions or the latest hot topics or fads or trends. That must not change. Psalm 119 says, "forever O Lord your word is settled in heaven." Everything else changes but the word of God will stand forever. Your pastoral staff are committed to preaching and teaching the word of God. My absence doesn't change that. You don't want to miss the new sermon series that Sarah will begin on May 21. Powerful insight into the Kingdom of God and God's word. Trust me, you're going to continue to be blessed with great preaching.

Missions is another part of our spiritual dna. Bro Eric Johnson who pastored in 1947 had spent 20 years as a missionary in the Belgian Congo. He resigned the next year, in 1948 to return to missionary service in Ghana. Although he was the pastor for less than two years, his life and love for missions and the advancement of the gospel around the world became part of our spiritual dna. Millions of dollars have been given to missions from this church. Missionaries have been called and sent from this church and we've added new missionaries to our support this year. Our commitment to missions won't change because I'm no longer the pastor. We already have missionaries scheduled to be here through the next few months. You will continue to be challenged to give, to pray and to go. You need to be aware that in the next decade, around 70% of our current A/G missionaries are going to be reaching retirement. Jesus said to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send laborers into the fields. We need to pray and some of us need to answer the call to go. We can't stop giving to missions and we can't stop saying yes to the Lord of the harvest and saying yes to going where he calls us to go, regardless of our age.

Christian Education/discipleship is another part of our spiritual dna. It was during the

early 1950's when Bro. Helvey was pastor that he led the church in constructing a two-story educational building just behind the sanctuary of the church facility on 48th. Bro. Helvey and Bro Minor and many of the other pastors were committed to building the Sunday School, bringing children in as well as adults, not only reaching people but training and discipling them in how to live a godly life and teaching them the word of God. We are still committed to teaching and studying the word of God around here. If you aren't learning I don't think you are trying. Sunday School, life groups, our online study of Luke and Acts with Pastor Brian. Age appropriate studies for all ages, from toddlers to the elders. You hear every Sunday what the children are learning and even have a chance to learn a verse with them. We want everyone to study and grow by learning God's word. There are no classes next Sunday but if you haven't been attending Sunday School, why not start on Mother's Day, May 14th? A great day to start!

Evangelism and Outreach are part of our spiritual dna. We want to make Jesus known to everyone, that he was the sacrifice who gave his life for us, the innocent one dying for us, the guilty so we could have our sins forgiven and have new life in him. The staff continues to plan ways to reach and serve our community. VBS is happening. Other outreaches are being planned and they will need you to make it work. We must stay committed to reaching our community and our world. It's who we are and who we are called to be as his church!

Dependence on the Holy Spirit. I said we were born in the fires of a Pentecostal outpouring, in part due to the urging of Rev. J.C. Minor who at the time was the pastor of the Carbondale Community church. He urged his members to seek a deeper experience with the Lord and he himself eventually became one of our pastors. I think it's fair to say that all of our pastors have encouraged us to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, to depend upon the working and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. David and Brenda Kelly were our youth pastors at a time when the Charismatic movement was sweeping across the nation and Dave helped us (helped me) learn to wait upon and trust the direction of the Holy Spirit in our church. I hope I've helped you learn to depend on and lean on the Holy Spirit. This is part of our dna. Keep relying on the Holy Spirit!

Compassionate care has always been part of our spiritual dna. Ministering to others in difficult times, caring for the sick, encouraging the discouraged, standing by people in their worst moments, that's what we are called to do, that's who we are, that's part of our spiritual dna. Bro Pieratt was known in the city of Tulsa for visiting the hospitals, the nursing homes, the jail. Bro McQueen was so compassionate in his care for the hurting. It's part of our dna. "Pastor

Phil isn't here. Who do we call?" Call your pastors. This staff is ready to pray, to come to you, to assist. Call a brother or sister in the church. We are all called to care, to pray, to bear one another's burdens. This is part of our spiritual dna.

In times past I fixed names to these things: Bro Owens represented the pioneer spirit, Bro Cornell represented commitment to the word of God, Bro Johnson represented missions, Bro Helvey Christian Education, Bro Pieratt Evangelism and outreach and Bro McQueen compassionate care and encouragement for the hurting. He had such empathy for others because of some of the things he had experienced in his own life. I wondered what someone would say about me, about what I might have contributed to the spiritual dna of Carbondale? When I've talked about this in the past, I always left it unsaid but as I thought about it, perhaps **Servanthood and the message of grace** would be appropriate.

It was in the early 1970's when I first met Gayle Erwin and heard his teaching on the Jesus Style and his emphasis on the servant nature of Jesus. Jesus himself said he hadn't come to be served but to serve and to give his life for others. This was the pattern we were to follow. As pastors and leaders we weren't to lord it over others but to serve others, to live others-centered lives. I don't know if I managed that or not, but that was certainly the desire of my heart.

I believe the church ministers better and can speak clearer from a posture of servanthood than from a posture of prominence and power. Our symbol is not one of earthly dominance but a cross, a symbol of sacrifice, death, emptying ourselves. We hold a basin and towel rather than a scepter and sword. We minister better as servants speaking truth to power. Servanthood is in our dna. Let's keep looking for ways to serve the Lord, each other and our community and world.

In the same way, the radical message of grace and of God's mercy captured my heart. Many of us grew up thinking God was out to get us and we could never be good enough to make it to heaven. We were right about that part. We'll never be good enough to earn our way into heaven. But the good news is Jesus offers us forgiveness of sins and eternal life not on the basis of our works but through repentance and our faith in him. My favorite verse from Titus 3, **"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."** Titus 3:5-7 Thank God His grace is part of our dna!

Spiritual dna. This is who we are and what we've been about for 90 years. What a wonderful heritage. All the labor, the giving, the struggle, the good times and the bad times, it's been worth it. 90 years of us being a place of healing, hope, laughter and peace. It's been worth the sacrifice and it still is. Be Carbondale AG. Be full of faith. Guard the unity of the church, make sure you love one another, defer to one another, forgive one another, value one another. Support the next generation, look out for the young, honor the elders. Depend on the Holy Spirit. Be missional, be servant hearted and others-centered. Don't lose sight of the value and importance of the church. This body, this facility is important. I know God doesn't dwell in temples made with hands, he dwells within each of us, the temple of the Holy Spirit, but this facility and what goes on here and the outreach that takes place from here and the acts of love and kindness and compassion and concern that comes from the people that call this their church home, the presence of this place in this community sends an important message. This church represents Jesus to this community. Make sure you keep showing them the real Jesus! Don't start fighting with one another. Don't make me come back up in here. Let this world be impacted and transformed, one life at a time, by you, Carbondale Assembly of God.

Our Spiritual DNA

A pioneer spirit, full of faith

Commitment to the Word of God

Missions

Christian Education/discipleship

Evangelism and Outreach

Dependence on the Holy Spirit

Compassionate care

Servanthood and the message of grace

Keep going. Get behind your pastors. Stand with them and be who you are. Be Carbondale Assembly of God and make a difference in this broken world!