

## **Carbondale Connect Part 1**

We are beginning a new series focusing on and celebrating the volunteers in the church and emphasizing the importance of involvement, connecting with one another. The church is the body of Christ and a body can only function when the parts are connected, in proper relationship with each other and with the head. We'll talk about this next Sunday but today I want to focus on the spiritual dna, the spiritual culture of our church. If you are part of this church, you need to know who we are and what has shaped the values, the culture of this church.

Every few years I've tried to share a bit of the history of the church to help everyone understand the people and events that have influenced and shaped us. Twenty years ago this past week an event occurred that played a major role in making us who we are today. **(Pictures of tornado)**. Twenty years ago today we were meeting in Victory's VBI building thanks to the generosity and kindness of Pastor Billy Joe Daugherty. For twenty months we met there as our facility was rebuilt after the tornado. We look back on that event and that season and see the faithfulness of our God. The Lord taught us to trust him for his direction, for his provision. We had \$2.9 million in insurance money and about \$300,000 in the bank. We spent \$4.8 million to rebuild and moved in debt free! More money in the bank and more people worshipping the Lord with us than when the tornado hit us. God lovingly moved us out of our comfort zone, moved us beyond our walls and into the community, into new territory. It shaped us. But the tornado wasn't the only thing that shaped us. Let me share a bit of our history. I'm going to make some broad characterizations this morning to make a point, essentially arriving at six characteristics that have shaped us, six aspects of our spiritual dna that make us who we are today.

Without going into great detail, some believers began meeting together in Red Fork in 1933 with F. A. Hill as their pastor. Another group began meeting in Carbondale around 1934 with Earl Davis as their pastor and these two groups merged to become Carbondale Assembly of God in 1934. 85 years ago. Here is a list of pastors over those 85 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**

Ten pastors in the first fifteen years and then four pastors in the next 69 years. All of these brought different talents and abilities to the church. Again, I am going to make some very broad generalizations about a few of these pastors and their ministries to make my point. Each of these pastors helped make us who we are. They are responsible for something of our spiritual dna. Their ministries helped fashion and shape the culture of our church. The first characteristic:

**Pioneering.** The first five names on the list I consider the pioneers of the church. If I remember correctly, Bro. Earl Davis had been a pastor at the Carbondale Community Church and began to bravely encourage his members to seek for a deeper experience with God. He received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and helped pioneer this new church. I never met any of the first five but I met Sis. Lynch and I knew Sis. Owens. I can recall her telling of the early days of Pentecost, trusting God for everything. Preaching on the street corners and in store fronts to establish churches. Being threatened, having rotten tomatoes thrown at them, but they were pioneers, willing to blaze a trail to bring the full gospel message to those who hadn't heard.

Bro. Owens was the pastor in September 1936 when the church purchased land at the corner of West 48<sup>th</sup> and South 31<sup>st</sup> West Ave. They borrowed \$1400 and pledges were made by the church members that totaled \$52.50 per month that enabled them to repay the loan. Members co-signed that note with the bank. They built the building we call the old rock church.

**(Picture).** It's still there although it looks different after multiple remodels and additions. A congregation is there this morning preaching the gospel and worshipping Jesus.

In 1939 Bro. Owens resigned to follow God's leading to pioneer new churches. What I'm telling you is that built into the fabric and foundation of our church is a pioneering spirit. The courage, the faith, the heart of a pioneer is in our spiritual dna. Those early members borrowed money and built in the heart of the great depression. 1936 unemployment was above

20% and they said, “Let’s obey God and build a building to reach our community and our world.” Hear me when I tell you, it’s part of who we are. They weren’t foolish risk takers, they were pioneers that trusted God and their spiritual dna is in us. It must be! We have to keep looking for ways to grow, to build and expand our influence, to reach more people with the gospel, regardless of the risk involved. We have to be pioneers because there are more lost, broken, hurting people in our community now than there were in 1936. The need is greater, the harvest is greater. We have to be courageous, we have to be daring in our faith, we have to sacrifice, we have to work, we have to give. They sacrificed so we could be here today. We have to sacrifice, we have to connect, we have to volunteer, we have to get involved so if Jesus tarries, 85 years from today someone else will be preaching about the pioneering courage of the church in 2019 that heard from God and dared to believe for greater things! 2<sup>nd</sup> characteristic:

**Pentecostal.** F. C. Cornell was one of my favorite preachers. **(Picture)** He was the pastor from 1939 to 1943 when he was elected to serve as the District Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Oklahoma. When I think of Bro. Cornell, two things come to mind. He was a strong preacher that laid a solid biblical foundation for this church and in addition, he emphasized a strong commitment to Pentecostal theology and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. He lived with a Pentecostal zeal. Everything was passionate, Spirit filled, intense with Bro. Cornell. He preached, prayed and pastored with a Pentecostal reliance upon the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Once again, it is who we are. We are a church built on the Word of God. We don’t decide our doctrine by what is fashionable but rather on what the Bible says. In order to live out the gospel we need the ever present power and anointing of the Holy Spirit so we can be the church Jesus called us to be. Jesus told his disciples they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them and they would be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. We believe in that spiritual empowerment because it’s what the bible says. It’s what those founding pastors preached and lived. It is part of our spiritual dna. It must be part of our spiritual culture today. This is who we’ve been and it is who we must continue to be. If we depart from the doctrine of God and the life and power of the Holy Spirit, we can’t be his church!

God help us to be a church built on the word of God and empowered by the Holy Spirit. May we be a church where the word of God is taught and preached and then that word is confirmed by signs and wonders and miracles that follow. May we live lives of passionate

spirituality – passionate about our love for God, passionate about God’s word, passionate about the Holy Spirit’s work in our life, passionate about the things of God. It’s part of who we are!

**Missional.** Eric Johnson was elected as pastor in 1947 following a term of missionary service in what was then called the Belgian Congo, then Zaire, now Democratic Republic of Congo. **(Picture).** Bro. Johnson arrived in San Francisco from Sweden in 1919, a back-slidden believer. He heard about a women preacher in whose meetings people were speaking in other languages. Not knowing English, he thought he would attend, maybe he would learn something. The preacher was Aimee Simple McPherson. He got saved, later filled with the Spirit and after attending bible college, and pastoring in California, he and his wife felt called to the Congo. They sailed for Africa in 1927, came home eventually after burying a baby son in the Congo and served as our pastor before returning to Ghana (then the Gold Coast). Although he was pastor for less than two years, his life and love for missions and the advancement of the gospel around the world was established firmly in this church. That heart for missions is part of our spiritual dna. I believe missions is the heartbeat of God and I believe we have enjoyed his blessings because we have remained focused on missions, focused on the mission, to go into all the world, into every person’s world and proclaim the gospel.

This morning in various places in the United States and around the world there are sons and daughters of this house proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, bringing hope to the lost and broken and hurting. In addition to those who were raised here there are missionaries in dozens of nations that we support with our prayers and finances. Missions is part of our dna. It must be! We mustn’t stop our efforts, instead, we need to be more intentional about reaching our world. God is still calling missionaries. Is he calling you? Missions is part of who we are.

**Discipling.** R. G. Helvey was elected as Pastor in 1950 and served for five years. **(Picture)** Sis. Helvey lives in Texas, up in her 90s. During their pastorate a two story educational building was constructed on the property at 48<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. Bro. Helvey had a heart for growing the Sunday School which resulted in building that educational facility. Christian education and discipling believers is part of the spiritual dna, the spiritual culture of this church. Jesus called us to go into all the world and to not just preach the gospel but to make disciples. He intended that we not only bring people into a saving relationship with Jesus, but that we disciple them and educate them as to how to live a Christian life. It’s why we still have Sunday School. It’s why we felt it was important to offer this new bible based core curriculum at 9:00

and 10:45 to teach the word of God. It's why we encourage you to attend one of these classes, because we have to know and understand God's word! If we don't know what the bible teaches, we will fall victim to the influence of the world and lose our way. The bible says the way to keep our life from sin and failure and mistakes is to know God's word and to hide his word in our heart! We have to remain committed to knowing, studying, teaching, imparting, proclaiming and living the word of God! We have to be about making disciples, of every believer, at every age, every season of life.

**Evangelistic.** H. D. Pieratt became the pastor in 1956 and served for 19 ½ years.

**(Picture).** He was the pastor when I moved to Tulsa and began attending here in 1967. It was during Bro. Pieratt's tenure that the church moved here on these ten acres and built the original buildings here. Bro. Pieratt was a soul winner and a lover of people all across this city. He didn't care who you were, rich or poor, black or white, he just loved people and wanted to bring them to Jesus. He visited people in jail, in the hospital, in nursing homes and homes throughout this city. Whatever the need, Bro. Pieratt was there and ready to pray, to lead someone to Jesus.

I've been here when people came by for food or assistance. He never let them leave without asking about their soul. "Are you saved? Do you know Jesus as your savior?" I remember being with him in Carl's Coney Island and a man came to the table and began talking to him. Bro. Pieratt said, "Well, let's pray" and there in the restaurant with everyone around eating and talking, Bro. Pieratt prayed for that man and his needs. That was the kind of man he was. That's the kind of church he built, a church that cares about evangelism and the eternal destiny of people. It's part of our spiritual dna to be soul winners, to love those who don't know Jesus as Savior and Lord. Outreach and evangelism has to be a part of everything we do. At the heart of this church there must be a desire for people to know Jesus in the forgiveness of their sins, to know the glorious new life that is available in Christ. It would be amazing to know how many people prayed a prayer of repentance and asked Jesus to save them and be the Lord of their life in response to the ministry of H. D. Pieratt. That heart for souls is part of the spiritual dna of Carbondale Assembly of God. It has to remain a part of who we are!

**Shepherding.** J. L. and Margie McQueen became the pastors in 1975 after Bro. Pieratt's retirement. **(Picture).** He was elected in August of 75 and he hired us as youth pastors December 31, 1975. I had the privilege then of working with Bro. McQueen almost the entire duration of his pastorate here. During his pastorate a two story educational wing and gymnasium

was completed and work begun on new office space.

Bro. McQueen had the heart of a shepherd. He loved people. Out of the pain and experiences of his own life he ministered encouragement and hope and comfort to so many who were hurting and struggling in their life. He brought a message of hope and inspiration. He had been through so much but his faith was strong and intact. He never questioned God but knew God was at work in our lives, even through the difficult times.

That heart of compassion for hurting people is a part of the spiritual dna of this church. It's part of our spiritual culture. You see it expressed in everything. Carbondale, a place of healing, hope, laughter and peace. It is a place where hurting people find healing and hope. A place where everyone is accepted and loved and encouraged to experience the life of God and to become all God desires you to be. You don't have to hide your pain or scars or try to put on your best Sunday face. A place of healing, hope, laughter and peace means it's the place for the sick and hopeless and grieving and discouraged to come and find help and life and peace!

These six characteristics, **Pioneering, Pentecostal, Missional, Discipling, Evangelistic, Shepherding**, this is our spiritual dna. This is who we were born to be. Now the question is how does this spiritual dna influence and inform us in 2019? That's a bit of our past, but what about today and what about the future? We can't rest on our past.

I'm asking today, where are the pioneers? Where are the ones who will dare to step out in faith and start new ministries? Who will reach out and beyond and take the gospel to people who haven't met Jesus yet? Who will be courageous and try something new, start a new ministry, pioneer a new church? Where are the pioneers ready to risk something for Jesus? It's in you. It's part of your spiritual dna.

Where are the Pentecostals among us, who are committed to God's word and the power of the Holy Spirit? Where are the folks that are hungry for and depending upon the Holy Spirit's power and equipping, that are believing for miracles today? There is spiritual power available!

Where are the missional folk, the missionaries that are answering God's call? You see, God is still calling people to service. Maybe he's calling you to a foreign field and there is plenty of opportunity and need. Maybe he's calling you to commit and get involved here in one of the dozens of ministries at CAG. There is a call for everyone. Look around. The need is everywhere. God, send laborers into the harvest field, here and around the world. We need people willing to sacrifice and serve, willing to give their time, their talent, their resources.

Where are the disciplers? We need teachers and mentors and people willing to make disciples of our children and youth and our adults and new converts. We need people to commit to being disciples, to be learners. We aren't doing this for our health! You need to attend a class and learn the word of God. People have sacrificed so you can learn the bible. Commit and connect to learning God's word.

Where are the evangelists? Where are those who are sharing your faith, your testimony with others? When was the last time you shared Jesus with someone? When was the last time you prayed with someone, pointed them to faith, told someone what Jesus has done for you? When was the last time you invited someone to church? We need people who will look beyond themselves and our own needs and look to the needs of others and connect them to Jesus!

Where are the shepherds? I know God calls some of us to be pastors, shepherds, but we all can have a ministry of helping the hurting, the broken, the hopeless. We can all share the love and compassion of Jesus with others, both inside and outside of the church. The needs are everywhere! Are you willing to love someone in Jesus' name? Are you willing to care for people as Jesus cares for you? It's part of our dna. As a part of Carbondale Assembly of God, this is in us. It's our nature, it's our calling, it's our culture, it's our destiny. God help us to be the church you've been shaping and fashioning us to be for 85 years. It's time for us to fulfill our destiny and calling. It's in our spiritual dna.

We need each one of you to do your part in order to be the church he intends us to be. A few of us can't do this. The pastoral staff can't do this. The volunteers we have now, and what a great team, but we can't do this without your help. We need you. We need you to connect. We need you to say "I'm part of this church. I've got that spiritual dna and I'm going to make a difference for Jesus' sake and for eternity's sake." It's who we are and who he is still calling us to be!