

SUMMER-2018

THE TIE THAT BINDS

A publication of First Baptist Church Greensboro
celebrating our homebound members

*“By this all men will know that you are my disciples,
if you love one another.” (John 13.35)*

Dr. Steve Pressley Retires: A Reflection

by Steve Sumerel

I have never been good at goodbyes. Perhaps, I harbor a latent pessimism that does not lend itself to any positive perspective of bidding someone farewell. My head tells my heart that goodbyes are inherently a mix of both sorrow and celebration. Celebration for what was once a part of our lives, sorrow that that celebrated part is leaving. I suppose you could say that goodbye is the outward expression of internal grief...and as we know...or as I keep telling myself...grief is a gift of God that ultimately heals the pain of separation.

So it is with a flurry of mixed emotions, I write this goodbye to our friend and fellow traveler through many a journey, Dr. Steve Pressley who retired after 25 years of ministry with us. The irony should not be lost on any of us that a farewell article for Steve will sound a bit like a eulogy. It is not my intent to do so, but goodbyes will inevitably have a common ring.

Steve Pressley's imprint upon the congregation of FBC is deep and it will be lasting. It is deep because his ministry touched so many aspects of congregational life; and lasting because the omnipresence of a focal leader for 25 years does not just disappear; it lingers in the multitude of relationships that he nurtured along the way.

This reflection is biased; it flows from my own experience of working alongside Steve for eight years. But, I would hope that it will invite your reflections, as well. Such is the nature of goodbyes; we each have our own reservoir of memories to guide us in the process of letting go.

First and foremost, I feel we must cast a view of Steve's pastoral care. Thoughtful ministers, like Steve, know that a crisis in the life of a member or a member's family is a window of opportunity to bring the presence of God into the situation. This is a reflective ministry, where the minister mirrors Christ's love, *(continued on page 2)*

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peace, and grace. Steve was among the most gifted in this form of ministry. This is not a practiced art, or a scholarly pursuit; reflective ministry is the result of genuine love, which brings an authentic response to the person in need.

Steve's authenticity in this ministry is evident in his encyclopedic memory of the people in his care. Steve can recall the names of extended family members, the history of their sojourn before coming to FBC, and medical histories which physicians would covet. He has an incredible knowledge of their valleys and their mountain tops; a knowledge that stems, not only out of hearing these life stories but, from becoming a crucial part of the narrative.

We often think of pastoral care in terms of hospital and homebound visits. Pastoral care is seen in timely phone calls bringing comfort and prayer, and notes of sympathy or congratulations. Dr. Pressley was certainly without peer in his attention to these aspects of congregational care. His visitation schedule of homebound, for example, was nothing short of extraordinary.

However, Steve exemplified another element of pastoral care that is not often understood as an aspect of that discipline. I was taught in school, but found it hard to believe, that proclamation "preached" during a funeral or memorial service is one the highest forms of pastoral care. It was not until I experienced a service conducted by Steve that I saw firsthand the power of a redemptive Gospel used as pastoral tool to heal the wounds of both life and death.

I was often the recipient of a couple of Steve's gifts that seem to be quite different, but frequently came in tandem. Steve was always ready with invited and appreciated wise counsel. He was a mentor. And his timely counsel was often wrapped neatly within his incredible wit. Steve's sense of humor was unique and clearly his own. It was pithy, understated and always razor sharp.

Alongside Steve's pastoral care, the area of ministry most identified with Dr. Pressley is his Bible teaching. Steve's Chapel Bible Study became an institution in our church many years ago, and the teaching of that Wednesday night course was his last official act he conducted before his retirement.

Steve's favorite book of the Bible to teach was Acts, however, there was no corner of the scripture left untouched in his years of study. Steve also presented monthly Bible studies during Prime Time, taught regularly in Sunday School, and presented regularly in the Tuesday Morning Men's Bible study. Steve missed very few opportunities to lead our deeper understanding of scripture.

Those attending Bible studies, however, only got a glimpse into the depth of Steve's scholarship. It was during many theological discussions that I came to appreciate Steve's deep theological understanding of scripture and its place in the life of the church. Steve was known for the depth of his scriptural knowledge, but fewer knew of Steve's vast knowledge of the history of theological thought, and his understanding of the theology of other faiths. Steve was constantly studying scripture, and his interpretations always flowed from his abiding faith while being informed by a long history of theological thought. Steve and I would probe finer points of Trinitarian theology, for example, and just when I was quite satisfied with all my conclusions, Steve was adept at asking the next good question. He would read Pope Benedict for fun, and *(continued on page 4)*



I Finally Found My Father! by Cliff Lowery

Soon after Carolyn's death in 2009 I launched another attempt to locate records regarding my father. Having grown up with my stepfather and my mother along with my younger stepbrother and stepsister; I only knew that my stepfather had known my real father when they were both in the military; the US Navy, I thought. Wrong.

When I initially did an online search for my father I got so many hits I was overwhelmed. There were hundreds of people using the same names I had entered, and they were in nearly every state in the union. Later, when I wrote to the Navy, I was informed that there was no Navy veteran with my father's name as I had submitted it. I had assumed that since my stepfather was in the Navy, my father must have been also. That turned out not to be true; actually he had been in the Army. Knowing that important piece of the puzzle, I still had much work to do.

I encountered many roadblocks, but continued my search for his existence following his divorce from my mother. My mother had not kept up with him and I had not tried to do so. In late January, I was still running into other brick walls. When friends offered to assist earlier this year, I was grateful and quickly accepted. It was near midnight one night while I was on vacation that I began to get some informative contacts that seemed to match. Finally that night, my friends were saying "THIS IS YOUR FATHER! More work on an ancestry website confirmed, and confirmed again, that I had finally found my father.

Since that wonderful night I began debating how I was going to involve myself in unsuspecting lives. I was thankful that I found lost siblings, yet wondered if they might not be as trusting as I might hope. After all, they did not know anything about me. Early the next day I made a phone call to a number that we thought would be my new found sister's home. I outlined my introduction carefully, worried some more, and finally at mid morning made the call; no answer. *(continued on page 4)*

Happy Birthday to You!

JULY

- **6 - Carolyn Ripley** 799 Old Mill Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27514 | 336-337-3315
- **8 - Eunice Beavers** Friends Home Guilford, Whittier - Cedars Room 27, 925 New Garden Road, Greensboro, NC 27410 | 336-299-1965
- **19 - Clyde Mitchell** Whitestone/Masonic Healthcare - Room 305, 700 South Holden Road, Greensboro, NC 27407 | 336-299-8631

AUGUST

- **2 - Wilma Fortune** Vera Springs, Apt.V108 - Heritage Green, 803 Meadowood Street, Greensboro, NC 27409 | 336-210-0352
- **3 - Larry Pike** 6100 W. Friendly Avenue, Apt. 1107, Greensboro, NC 27410 | 336-273-1667
- **9 - Terri Battle** 3704 Wedgedale Place, Greensboro, NC 27403 | 336-292-1904
- **12 - Sue Weddle** Friends Home Guilford, Whittier, Maples #60-B, 925 New Garden Road, NC 27410 | 336-907-8238
- **15 - Warren Bass** 107 East Brentwood Road, Greensboro, NC 27403-1002 | 336-299-8140
- **17 - Jean Bundy** Wellington Oaks Memory Care, 3004 Dexter Avenue, Room 414, Greensboro, NC 27407 | 336-261-0021
- **27 - Willie Pitts** 1713 Brookcliff Drive, Greensboro, NC 27408-2529 | 336-288-5905
- **30 - Ruth Caraker** 3701 Hope Court, F1, Greensboro, NC 27407 | 630-363-1510

SEPTEMBER

- **1 - Sarah Carter** Adams Farm Health & Rehab, Room 303, 5100 Mackay Road, Jamestown, NC 27282 | 336-346-9565
- **2 - James Deere** Blumenthal Nursing, 3724 Wireless Drive, Greensboro, NC 27455 | 336-617-6266
- **5 - Roberta Hartgrove** 2216-C New Garden Road, Greensboro, NC 27410 | 336-286-3010
- **9 - Helen Stinson** C/O Mrs. Millie S. Power, 2218 Wanda Drive, Greensboro, NC 27408 | 336-275-1014

I Finally Found My Father

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So, I was able to follow my outline and leave more information that I wanted to impart, before it would cut me off. Connie Lowery returned the call late in the afternoon and we talked for more than 2 and 1/2 hours. She was aware of the existence of a brother, but had no further information. A week later, I talked with my new found brother, Ron. He was glad to meet me over the phone and we have planned for the family to meet this spring or summer; hopefully, after my daughter and family return to the US from their first two years as missionaries in Italy with Avant Ministries.

Unfortunately, a younger sister is no longer alive; but I am ecstatic about the wonderful news and plan to have a grand meeting soon. It will not be a reunion, as we have never been together before, but everyone seems so excited to meet for the first time, including my other sister that I grew up with as youngsters. However, the brother from that family is deceased also.

It has been quite the challenge, but the rewards have been great! I am so grateful for my new family and for friends that encourage us along the way. Never give up!

IN LOVING MEMORY

Remembering...

We honor those homebound who have gone to live with the Lord. We were graced by their presence.

Vernon Keen – 3/21/18

Earlean Price – 4/5/18

Marshall Johnson – 4/18/18

Betty Lusk – 5/21/18

Dot Rierson – 6/7/18

The Tie That Binds is a quarterly publication to honor our homebound members. Birthdays and other news feature homebound members only.

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The Tie That Binds

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would study ancient rites of burial for the sheer delight of expanding his vast knowledge of beliefs and customs revolving around death and dying. His joy in reading, no doubt, also contributed to his vast vocabulary which is certainly another aspect of Steve's ministry for which he shall be remembered.

Everyone who accompanied Steve on any of his three Habitat mission trips to Jordan came to appreciate another set of Steve's gifts. The building of homes was secondary to his primary goal of building relationships with the people of Jordan in general and to the residents of Ghour Al-Safi in particular. The Jordanian people loved Steve. From the Sheik of the town, to the local Habitat personnel, to the impoverished home owners, Steve became a part of the community he served by genuinely and authentically loving these people as Christ loved them. His heart, hands, voice, smile, and love were all inspired tools to build not only a cinder block home, but the Kingdom of God.

Many shall remember Steve's hosting numerous Senior Adult trips. Others will highlight his pastoral prayers. All shall remember his inquiring about your health or that of a family member. We shall all remember how he made time for you. But, what shall we celebrate and miss the most: his prayers, his studies, his memorial services, his friendship, his pastoral care, his abiding faith? Yes...that is precisely what we shall celebrate and miss the most; the entirety of a true man of God, who gave his whole self to his flock; this beloved congregation.

Steve has retired. We have bid him a well-deserved and faithful farewell. And even as we celebrate our journey together, we begin to heal.