

My Passion Is...Learning



**Rev. Dr. Cynthia T. Turner, Pastor
Dayspring Community Church
Lanham, Maryland**

If there were a word, or phrase to sum up the unique passion that God has given you, what would it be?

My passion without a doubt is learning. By this, I do not merely mean the knowledge we gain from books and hard study, but also the insight that comes from being still, from living contemplatively, and from trusting in the One in whose Presence we live and move and have our being. The joy of each new day with Jesus is that within it lies the potential for discovering some new truth (which is more than likely an old truth that I am just uncovering), some creative concept or deep idea. I believe God is turned on by our quest to discover more of God's ways, to delve deeper into understanding God's thoughts and to turn our attention to God's way in the world. Sometimes that requires digging and plowing and getting messy, other times it requires resting and observing and simply breathing. Jesus modeled that. But it all adds up to the type of learning that results in growth. And if you're not busy growing, you're dying.

Running a very close second for me is the art and craft of preaching, because my preaching grows out of the Truths gained through learning, living in the Presence, and being still. There's nothing more appealing to me – absolutely nothing -- than hearing a good sermon, except delivering one.

How has that passion worked its way into the purpose of your ministry at your church?

Our purpose is to live Christ-centered lives. I pastor a modest-sized congregation of folks who lead very busy lives, so we have had to be creative in our efforts to grow spiritually and numerically. And we recognize the importance of both. Our challenge is not unlike parishioners everywhere: finding the energy, time and resources to actually live the lives we are called to live as disciples of Christ. Because we meet in a school, we have had to be especially creative in our efforts to learn and grow – sometimes that has meant classrooms and books, other times it has meant home-based ministries and fellowships. Either way, the emphasis is always on continually excelling and growing and the church has begun to embody this ethic as an important part of even the busiest schedule.

What group of people has the Lord laid heaviest on your heart?

From an early age, I have had an affinity for the least and the left-out. I seemed to be drawn to the kid in class that everyone else ignored or ostracized and that kid seemed to be drawn to me too. Perhaps that's because I've never been a part of the popular in-crowd. The other group that has attracted my attention is women. That may be due to the fact that I grew up in an extended family made up largely of women.

What are the unique challenges of ministering in the DC Metro area?

Many pastors would likely confess to sharing a sense of isolation. One reason is that it's inherent in this vocation, but that's not the only explanation. Another reason is because being isolated requires less effort, less risk, and less energy than being connected with others. So it becomes a choice, albeit an unhealthy

one, for many of us. This is perhaps true of pastors everywhere, but it's exacerbated when it comes to women pastors in this area because outside of DCBC, the professional ministerial alliances in the DC area are still largely "old boy" networks. The irony is that in the most powerful city in all the world, the church is perhaps the only entity where women are still a feared part of the group, and certainly leadership. In politics, there's a female speaker of the house and females at presidential cabinet level positions; in business, there are female heads of corporations and nonprofits; in other denominations, there are female bishops; and the list goes on. But in the Baptist denomination, there's still a great deal of fear and we still have a ways to go to realize the same level of acceptance and inclusion among women.

What is your favorite scripture?

"And Mary said, 'Behold, the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.'"
Luke 1:38

This is the scripture that I stated when I surrendered my life to the Lord and privately accepted my call to the ministry.

My Passion Is...Social Justice and Advocacy



Rev. Kip Banks, Pastor
East Washington Heights Baptist Church
Washington, D.C.

"God calls us to be prophetic. I am passionate about making the church an effective agent of change in the community."

If there were a word, or phrase to sum up the unique passion that God has given you, what would it be?

Making the church an effective agent of change in the urban community. I grew up in an area where there were so many churches, but they were doing so little to transform the lives of those in the surrounding neighborhoods. However, I believe that God wants the church to be the principal agent of change in the community by offering ministries that address a totality of needs including health and wholeness, educational resources and economic development.

How has that passion worked its way into the purpose of your ministry at your church?

At our church, our vision is to become "An intergenerational family of disciples who love God love neighbors and transform the community the Gospel of Christ." We have focused on ministries that offer healing for those inside the church, but we also established ministries for those outside the church including a food pantry, clothes closet and a street ministry evangelism program. We have also partnered with organizations like the Southeast Whitehouse to provide an after school program for community residents teaching children the gracious arts including painting and drama.

What group of people has the Lord laid heaviest on your heart?

I have a special passion for intergenerational relationships – the young and the old. I feel that the generational gap is too big and that this is a major issue that we, the church of Jesus Christ, must address. We must have programs not just for the old and young, but ministries that focus on bringing these two groups together.

What are the unique challenges of ministering in the DC Metro area?

A unique challenge of doing ministry in the DC metro area is the vast power of the federal government. In the nation's capital, pretty much everything revolves around the government and this is also true in many DC churches. Often there is a desire to run the church like a government agency. Furthermore, in August, when the U.S. Congress goes on recess, we also fight against the desire for the church to go on recess. However, the reality is that Satan never takes a break and neither should the church!

What is your favorite scripture?

One of my favorite scriptures is John 14:6. "Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." I love this scripture because it reminds us no matter what the problem may be Jesus is the answer!

My Passion Is...Compassion



**Rev. Dr. Ella Redfield, Pastor
New Creation Baptist Church
Wheaton, Maryland**

Favorite scripture: Matthew 6:33

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

In a word or phrase, what would you say is the call that the Lord has placed on your heart?

Compassion. Compassion is what I feel deep in my spirit and in my soul. It is my strongest point and it's also my weakest, because sometimes I can take compassion a little bit too far; almost to a point that it might be a detriment to me. That's compassion. My compassion is for people who are broken, people who are marginalized, and people that society says, "You don't fit." I have a real strong compassion for them. In society, we tend to say that these are the good people, these are the perfect people. Even in the church—you are a sinner, you are a saint—and I don't think God is about that. I think God really believes that every one of us, good, bad or indifferent are a piece of God. In my church I try to illustrate this visually. I draw a circle and the circle is who we are, but inside I draw another circle and inside that circle is God. But the problem with so many of us human beings is that we keep stepping away from God and when we step

away from God we don't have a sense of who we are. So, I feel that my calling is to somehow be an instrument, a vessel if you will, to help people to move back and see that God is within every one of us. It's not about those who are good and those who are bad; it's about helping us to understand that we are a piece of God. God created us, God made us, God made us in the image of God and so that's what I believe and that's what I teach and preach.

How does this then translate into your church?

People who come to my church and are looking for me to preach about those who are going to hell and preach about those who are bad and preach about this sin and that sin-- I don't preach that. What I try to preach is to help people get in touch with who they are. It's interesting that today we have more churches than we've ever had, but we have more broken people. Obviously, we as the church need to do a better job of meeting their needs.

I have a very small church and we do our best to help those who come into our midst to understand the [importance of] making that connection with God, just as Jesus made that connection. Jesus made that connection and He was quite clear who He was. He said that God and I are one. I'm trying to get people to understand that God and I are one and when we understand that then we can make that connection, then we can experience the life that God has so uniquely designed for each and every one of us. We don't have to be broken. We don't have to experience the roughness and the toughness of life. Not to say that we won't have difficulties, but when they come we understand what they are and we don't wallow in it, we recognize it. In fact, we will welcome it because everything is about learning and growing.

Is there a group of people God has most laid on your heart to minister to?

Actually, no. I believe that there are no accidents in life. I believe that the people that God would have me to minister to, they may not necessarily come into my church doors, but somehow we will come and our paths will cross. I have gone to different parts of this country and spoke. I have taken classes in different parts of the country so there are people whose path that I will touch and they will touch mine as well as those who will come into my midst in our church. We had one lady who came to the church and she was there for about a year and she left and she sent me an email and she said that I just can't believe that stuff. And I said, well you know that's fine because you don't have to believe what I believe but this is what I'm teaching, a new creation. We are a new creation and God is using all kinds of people.

Yesterday, in my New Life Hour; I don't have Sunday school, I have what we call New Life Hour and that is the time of personal growth, and I was talking about that everything in life prepares us for our purpose. I talked about the year that I started school, which was a year that schools were integrated and I talked about the discrimination that I experienced in white schools in Montgomery County and how the teachers would not encourage the students to pair up with someone who was African American and of course all through school I was the only African American in my class and so the teacher would say, "Everybody pair up." Well, I was always left as the person that no one would pair up with so I know what it feels like. I know what it feels like to be discriminated against but it's a good thing because I bring that type of compassion to the table. I'm bringing that to the table for ministry. So God, in His infinite wisdom, had a plan from day one and as we make that connection with God then it all begins to make sense. So, whoever comes to New Creation, I don't care what they look like, I don't care what they smell like, I don't care what their lifestyle is, everybody who comes to New Creation, I teach and preach that they are a piece of God and we have to understand that and recognize that and when we understand that everybody is a piece of God then we are going to treat them like God.

What are the unique challenges of ministering in the DC Metropolitan area?

Well, my ministry is out in the suburbs and so the unique challenge for me is not so much the people coming and going. My challenge is image because I find that so many people today are into image and because my church doesn't look like the big church and doesn't have all the frills and the bells and the whistles that some of the mega churches have that is a challenge. We are in the time that everything that's big is better. So, my real big concern and issue is image. If people don't see my outside looking a certain way then they're not going to come on the inside and so it doesn't matter what the message is that I have.

It doesn't matter how great I preach, it's not even about that because they don't get to that point to experience that. So, it's a constant struggle for me to move my church from one point to the other.

What is your favorite scripture?

My favorite scripture is Matthew 6:33-- "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Going back to what I preach and teach, they're outside looking for the kingdom and down through the years the churches have taught us to look outside for our good, to look up to God and look to Jesus coming. I preach and teach that the kingdom is within and Jesus taught that the kingdom is within. Somewhere in the third chapter of Matthew He talked about the kingdom of God is here. Go back to the circle again. God is in the middle of everything, God is in the midst of us and God is in us. So when the people leave my church, they leave hearing something to the effect that, "Leave this place and go with confidence, knowing that God is before you, God is beside you, God is behind you, God is above you, but most importantly God is in you."

My Passion Is...Service



**Rev. Dr. Kendrick Curry, Pastor
Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church
Washington, D.C.**

Favorite Scripture: Luke 4:18

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised..."

If there were a unique call or purpose that the Lord has spoken to you, what would that be?

If I had to sum it in one word, it would be service. Service because I realize that we are all here for a purpose and we're to be in relationship with one another as we are in relationship with our Lord and Savior. I think about Jesus as He took a towel and wrapped it around Himself and washed the disciples' feet. And He says to Peter that unless I wash your feet, you will have no part in me. That teaches us a very valuable lesson regarding service and that really is what our life is about. It's not about always the glamorous jobs and the glorious jobs because I've had those but I realize that the most important thing in life is being obedient to God and being first to serve because then you emulate Jesus Christ.

What are you doing in your church to make sure that your church is also carrying out that passion?

We're really focusing in on the community in the immediate area. That has been our first phase focus. The reason for that is because we have to work in Jerusalem and in Judea then go into the uttermost parts of the earth. We have to do so by looking at what's in Jerusalem. Oftentimes, I'm finding our churches nowadays neglect Jerusalem and go straight to the uttermost parts of the earth. Particularly in the inner city, where we're located, we have a great opportunity to serve. We sit between some of the most upper middle class folks that you could imagine and some that are not quite as empowered and both need help.

It doesn't matter where you are on the spectrum of wealth or status or station—all need help. They're all the children of the Almighty God. So, we are starting in our own backyard, reaching out to the community. Going and trying to bring the children in, reaching their parents, making sure that we're engaged in their lives. We have a variety of activities, like our Wednesday night program where we feed and we share with children and we share with one another. We have Bible Study and we incorporate the children into it. We have our prayer meetings and our choir rehearsal so there's a lot that goes on through the week at the Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church.

We are also connected to other organizations that are in the community that are trying to do similar things that we are. Like the Southeast White House and others where they share our space and we engage with their activities. Also, we have a charter school that's co-located with us and it's a wonderful opportunity to see the parents come into a church that happens to house a charter school in it and it provides a means of a safe place and comfort. And that sense of open space, of sacred space is what we're trying to create so that we have a presence in the community that allows us to be transformative in our thinking, transformative in our living and just learning to be the people of God that we're called to be. Once such an infrastructure is put into place then we march on from Jerusalem into Judea, into Samaria, into the uttermost parts of the earth because we do believe in an "and both" gospel that says we have to do the local and we have to do the foreign. I would say that through our efforts in terms of Wednesday night meetings and sharing and service time, that's really how we're touching the community. We're also actively engaged in missions and giving great sums of money to Katrina relief and to other sorts of things. We're trying to meet people where they are. I would say that's my personality, that's the hallmark of ministry, when you can meet someone, it doesn't matter rich or poor, black or white, and you can really touch them where they are. When hearts relate to one another and we can get heart to heart and past the hue of somebody's skin and look at the content of their character, then and only then will we truly know what Jesus really was about.

We've done voter registration. We just had a Red Cross program where we taught a course in mass feeding in case there's an attack or an emergency. We had some folks come certified so that they could be able to share in the event of an unfortunate catastrophe in the United States. You would be able to feed thousands. Recently, we held a health and wellness fair where we looked at the number of persons in our congregation suffering with cancer. We put together a fair, not only for them but also for people in the community. It was sponsored by the American Cancer Society, so we partnered with them. Then we brought in other services that people need from Ident-A-Kid, to help our kids with being identified to the Board of Elections in teaching our folks to vote. We deal with the whole person and serve the whole person; we're able to better teach them what Christ is like. We want to be replicas of the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ and be those to show our love of God with all our heart, mind and soul and show our love of neighbor as ourselves.

If there's a particular group of people that you say the Lord has laid, heaviest on your heart, could you identify that group?

I would identify that group as, what I call, the under-employed, the under-hired. That group is a group that has so much latent potential that's just untapped. That group is a group that has struggled and strived but not been able to make it. They have good moral fiber and they have great backbone and they learn to do a lot of things but the breaks in life have not really been in their favor. And so getting those together, helping them to remain gainfully employed, to be able to have homes that they own and to be able to advance as they find success. Those would be the group that most burdens my heart...They're the group that has children and they are children of the future so they can help as a bridge between those that are unemployed and totally disempowered versus those that are middle class and moving. It's that in between group that I don't think we look at enough that needs some help—those that are trying, day in and day out, to do the right thing but sometimes it just doesn't appear that the season is right for them.

What are the unique challenges of ministering in the DC Metropolitan area?

DC is a very interesting city. I think the challenges reflect the nature of DC. It's a very cosmopolitan, very beautiful city with all sorts of diversity in it. But I often think diversity is located in various areas of DC and we don't "cross the aisle," if you will, enough to meet those that are as significant in terms of who we need

to minister to. DC has an opportunity to be the greatest city in the world. It is the nation's capital and as we reach out in the nation's capital...the greatest challenge that we have is bridging diverse groups and having them come in the conversation where we can find common solutions to common challenges—with the peace and the love of God. So, I would say that ministering in DC and particularly in Southeast DC, where I am, which is considered to be part of the inner city but linked to Capitol Hill by only one bridge, means that we have to not only take the people in Hillcrest and some of the other neighborhoods that are in the ward but we also have to cross the bridge and be bridge builders so that we can touch Capitol Hill as well as some of those that are in Benning Terrace...The greatest challenge I see in ministry is building the bridges between the young and the old, the rich and the poor, those that are disempowered versus those that are in power so that we might truly be people of one spirit, one heart and one mind that know how to genuinely love.

What is your favorite scripture?

My favorite scripture is found in Luke 4:18, and it says the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. I know that that's what I'm called to do. How do we recover sight for the blind? How do we help those that are bruised? How do we engage ourselves in those that are broken hearted? That's the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ and if we are to be like Christ then perhaps we need to look more at what He did, at what His life reflected. We are the body of Christ so I get excited about that because that goes back to service. If we're interested in those that are left out and least, then we have to be willing to go into the gutters, into the streets, into the Southeast Washingtons, into those areas that nobody wants to go into and do the dirty work of ministry for the glory of our Lord. That's the good news because we're doing it for His glory. Many of us could have had other careers and done other things but God called us out and said I placed you here for a purpose and because I placed you here, now you can do some service that's greater than you thought you could ever do by yourself or on your own. You can watch me do miracles even in today's time. So that gets me excited and I look for not only the oppressed to go free but the oppressor to go free. So that when both are set free and liberated we now have a brand new way of loving one another because liberation leads to love as I look at it. And once it leads to love there's no thing that can limit us. No weapon formed against us shall prosper. There's nothing that shall ever come against us that we can't tackle or overcome because our Lord is in the middle of that with us. So, we're in a love thing with Jesus, we have it vertically and we have it horizontally and I'm excited about that.

Our Passion Is...Seeing Unity Happen



**Revs. David and Maureen Freshour
Chevy Chase Baptist Church
Washington, D.C.**

Favorite Scripture: Matthew 18:19-20

"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

What is your passion?

MAUREEN: I saw the questions at first and David said why don't you just answer them?

DAVID: She's the writer.

MAUREEN: I love to write, but I said, "How do I know that I'll capture one unified word or one unified idea because I think the value of us being together is that I bring a certain passion and then he brings either another passion or he brings the administrative ability...."

DAVID: She comes up with the idea, I make it happen.

MAUREEN: Yeah! I may have the idea but he's the one who has the means to see it through.

DAVID: She's much more of a visionary than I am and I'm much more of a practitioner. She can say, "Why don't we try this?" And I say, "We can't afford that." Or she'll say, "We can't afford that or that won't work here." And I'll say, "Well yeah, if you see it then we can do it." We may have to change this or that but she's much better at thinking outside of the box than I am.

MAUREEN: So, I guess back to what we're passionate about. The one thing that we absolutely agree on, even though we may come at it from different angles or methods, is that we're really passionate about seeing unity happen and seeing the Kingdom being promoted and not an empire. And, we're really, really tired of churches that are segregated on Sunday morning—going to the white church, going to the black church—that's not the Kingdom.

DAVID: Where we came from, the reason we're in DC, is because we left a church that when we went there, there were 800 people and when we left there were 3,000 and we resigned because it was not, I don't think, pleasing to God. It looked a lot like us but it was not the Kingdom. It was all white. So we just resigned and we were asked what do you guys desire to do and we said we'd love to start a church from the ground up in a large metropolitan area where we don't have to deal with traditions, where we don't have to deal with the way they've always done it and that's how we ended up here. So, our church now doesn't look like a typical church. It looks a lot like D.C. So our vision, our passion really is unity. In D.C. that's not as easy as you think; it kind of goes against, not the spiritual, but the political climate.

How do you take your passion and apply it in your church?

DAVID: If I could change the word from unity to agreement. I think there's a difference between unity and agreement. Unity means everyone is on the same page. Agreement means at least some of us are. So let's just focus on what we agree on. Maureen and I don't agree on everything but there are some things that we do agree on. So, if you focus on what you agree on and the scripture that is kind of like our life's scripture, Matthew 18:19-20, and it says that where two or three of you agree, I'm there. And the word agreement is symphony in Greek and it means all of these different instruments playing together in accord. So you could be a trumpet, you could be a drum, you could be a piano, you could be a guitar, you could be black, you could be white, you could be Latino and you could be Asian but if you at least agree that Jesus is Lord, okay, that's a good start. You don't have to agree on speaking in tongues, you don't have to agree on raising your hands, you don't have to agree on praise and worship, and you don't have to agree on how they preach or what they wear. But what do you agree on? So, I think that really kind of sums up unity. We don't agree on everything but what we do agree on—it's good!

DAVID: We have all these different people and we've often said, actually Maureen said it, we will protect the right of the person who wants to raise their hands as much as the person who does not want to raise their hands. They're both equal and it's completely okay. I have a 98-year old original member. He's a retired judge and he's like a hero to me. He's the patriarch of the church, but he certainly doesn't get half the stuff we do but he agrees with it.

MAUREEN: And he supports it.

DAVID: And he supports everything. So, to have that agreement, although he's never going to raise his

hands, he's never going to speak in tongues, he's never going to dance in the aisles—not that we do, but if anybody wants to, they can. So he respects that they can do that.

If there is a group of people that you had to say that the Lord has laid on your heart to minister to, who would that group be?

DAVID: We love this city because all the nations are here. We are so atypical for the Baptist body perhaps, but I do think we represent the Kingdom. We send out mission teams to Africa. We have ministries in Ghana, we have ministries in Moscow, we have ministries in South America, we have ministries in India but they're all here. The fact is that they're all in Washington, D.C. The Embassies are all here. We have this really unusual church. We have flags in our church that represents all the nations and we probably have like 40 flags. We have folks from Zambia, we have folks from the Philippines...you name it, we got it.

MAUREEN: And it's very transient, this area is. We have people from Australia that are here for three years. We have people from World Bank and students from all over the place. When I read that question, I started to say something that was so touching, "I care about the disenfranchised and the homeless" and I do but God gives us a passion so that everyone is taken care of.

DAVID: Just like the homeless need an advocate, so do these kids who come to American University who are here for four years. They've left their homes and they've left their security blankets, they've left all this stuff. As well as folks who work with government.

MAUREEN: We've traveled internationally and it's an unusual feeling when you're away from your home country...it can be isolating whether you are 19 or 45 years old. I'll grant you that our church is not for everyone. It's a little out there. It's a little bit more freeing. We don't use hymnals and we play rock music.

MAUREEN: If there's a tragedy that happens in our church then the sermon might not get preached and we just call the person up front and we just pray for them. It's like what a family would do.

DAVID: We don't take an offering that day; we just give it to them. And my leadership, originally, would go, "Are you kidding me? And I'll say, "You know what? I think we have a greater need here today." And our leadership trusts us—we've been here almost 12 years now. We knew what we had done. We knew how to grow an organization. She [Maureen] was a very successful business woman and I was a very successful pastor. When we came together, we knew how to do it but it was an empire. That's why our desire is to grow the Kingdom and not an empire. We can grow an empire. You can do that in your sleep. A family is just a small version of an empire and if you can do that you can grow a good business. At the end of the year, we raise...[money], and we don't have a lot left in the bank because we give a lot away.

MAUREEN: I think that's why they call it non-profit.

DAVID: But that is really key, that when people come in they don't have to go through a 16-week new members' class with us. We'll go out to lunch with you. Our folks will spend time with you and you can tell. If they don't share your vision, if they don't share your passion, that's okay. There are 50 other churches within a mile. We're under strong authority; we've got a strong leadership board—business people, CEOs. We had to make sure we're under strong leadership.

What are the unique challenges of ministering in the D.C. Metropolitan area?

DAVID: I think one is the transient nature of the area. They're in so quick. They're here for three years, four years and then they're out. There's such diversity and we see diversity as strength. Every church I've been a part of— I pastored in North Carolina, Annapolis, Md., and West Virginia— we all looked alike, we acted alike, we thought alike, we shopped alike. Not our church. We're all so different. I think that's a challenge. I think it's a great challenge but also I think if you take the challenge and say okay well we've only got this group for three years, let's adapt to that. And let's say, okay they're here for three years, let's plug them in, let's get involved and let's bless Australia. We really do have people from all over the world who have been members of our church. We have very few people from Chevy Chase who are members of

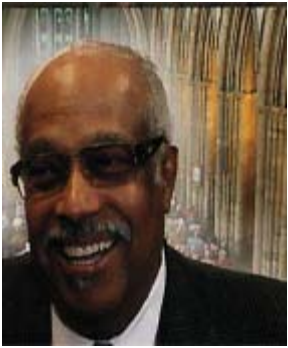
our church because our community is predominantly elderly, predominantly white and predominantly Jewish. We love and we're trying to reach them.

MAUREEN: Yesterday we cancelled church and the congregation went out and we cleaned up the neighborhood and people were coming out of their houses asking, "Why are you doing this?" And we told them that we cancelled church to clean up the neighborhood and that was unheard of.

DAVID: It's this faith in action program. It says, "Don't go to church, be the church." And we had all these T-shirts on and people thought we were anti-church. A former mayor of Atlanta popped up and he thought we were with a community program, serving our penance.

MAUREEN: Other than the minor weird things about being in D.C., the other thing we're really, really adamant about is that we make it a rule that politics does not enter the church. It is particularly, right now, really difficult to hold fast to that so that we don't make political statements or promote a political agenda. We're about God's agenda.

My Passion Is...People



Rev. Dr. H. Beecher Hicks, Jr.
Senior Minister
Metropolitan Baptist Church
Washington, D.C.

Favorite Scripture: Luke 4:18

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised..."

If there were a particular passion that the Lord has laid on your heart, what would that be?

I don't think it's possible for anyone to be engaged in ministry who does not have a passion for people. In every respect, the things that make them laugh, the things that make them cry, the things that give meaning to their lives, the things that take meaning from their lives-- all of those things are important. And it's a great privilege, it's an honor when people let you inside the cocoon of their lives and let you walk around the cabins of their minds to understand who they are, what they are experiencing and what's important to them. So, it's that passion for people and being able to communicate with them at multiple levels.

How do you take your passion and translate it into how you minister in your own church?

I think God has a great sense of humor and God has placed me in several churches, I'm in my fourth

church...and every church has had its own personality, its own challenge and its own difficulty and its demons. It's had all of that but it seems that God has put me in some places at particular times when I was destined to try to lead people from a wilderness experience into their own destiny.

I think that's where God has placed me and, unfortunately, He has not given me a lot of tools. As I'm fond of saying, "The only tool we have is a name." The scripture says that at the Name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Other than that we have nothing. Jesus surrounded Himself, as Pastor (Eldridge) Spearman has said, with one guy who was a loud mouth, another guy that denied Him, somebody else that was out of sorts with society...

So, our tools, the things that make this work, are not an affiliation with some high powered people. We are left to deal with the very salt of the earth. That's how Jesus defined the disciples. He was not telling them something that they were about to become. He said right now, I know you. You are the salt of the earth. There's nothing presumptive about you. He was not going to bring the kingdom in as a result of the people that were around Him. The kingdom only comes in as a result of an allegiance to Him, of an allegiance to the One whose Name we revere and whose life we love and by whose blood we are redeemed. I think to carry the question a little further, the only tool I have is the Name and it is the glory of the gospel. It is by stumbling and stuttering tongues that we take this Word and seek to find flesh to introduce flesh to the Word. To introduce the animate to the inanimate and to make the inanimate, animate. So that the Word becomes flesh and it dwells in us. The proclamation of the gospel took me to a passage of scripture, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel and to preach the acceptable year of our Lord." All of that is what I'm commissioned, called and sent to do.

Is there a particular group of people that the Lord has laid heaviest on your heart?

I wouldn't say that there was a particular group of people. I think that my challenge has been to be able to meet people with the gospel no matter where I am. So that if I'm speaking in South Africa or if I'm speaking in the American Cathedral in Paris or if I'm speaking at a convention hall in Sydney, Australia; it's the same gospel but a different group of people and the word has to go forth in ways that they will be able to hear it. That's the agency of the Holy Spirit that takes the word we speak and translates it, mid-air so that I'm speaking in the tongue of others without even knowing it.

What are the unique challenges of ministering in the Washington, D.C. area?

The challenge is that it is the D.C. area. You must not forget that this is really the capital of the world. This is not the capital of the United States. In every sense of the word, this is the capital of the world. Everything comes here. Everything either starts here or ends here. All of the major political, economic decisions, sooner or later, are going to wind up in Washington. That is why it is such a diverse city. It is such a cosmopolitan place. There are people who come here from all over the world. Therefore, they bring their cultures, their races, their religions, and they bring everything to Washington, D.C. I could never stand up on our street in Washington, D.C. and not be affected by the fact that I'm five minutes away from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Simply to be able to preach in that vortex it seems to me is both a blessing and a burden. It's a great town and I'm grateful that the Lord sent me here.

My Passion Is... Global Missions



Rev. Joseph Lyles, Pastor
Fort Foote Baptist Church
Washington, D.C.

Favorite Scripture: Phil 3:14

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

If there was a word, a phrase, that describes what the Lord has laid on your heart as your passion, what would you say that is?

Missions. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts. Every June we usually go to Kenya, we work there with Bridgeway Baptist Church. Pastor Elijah Wanje has come to Fort Foote also to minister with us. In July, we do Katrina missions down in New Orleans where we do construction renovations. This past June, we had about ten teams at ten different locations. In fact, we had 105 people in New Orleans from 11 different churches. Part of our goal is to be a regional training center for global missions. So, June Nairobi, July New Orleans, in August we do Kingston, Jamaica. Missions would be my passion. We often say that charity begins at home, but it shouldn't end at home. I like to think of the world as my neighbor. Nairobi is kind of like a second home.

What specifically do you do to translate that vision to other people within your current church?

The DC Baptist Convention has helped because they are so mission- minded. Dr. Haggray and Dr. Cochran have come out and shared with us so being in this Convention kind of makes it easy to do missions. The training, the recruiting-- they have their global connection and then they tell us how to set up this ministry in our church. We get the best of both worlds. Just preaching and teaching and going on missions. If the pastor goes on missions then the sheep will say, "Wait a minute!" They'll come along. We also try to do is reach out to persons from other countries that may be in Maryland, D.C., or Virginia. Kenyans are not in Nairobi, Kenya but we try to reach out to the Kenyans that are here. We have a full time missionary in Jamaica from our church. He's from Barbados. There is also Ms. Chambers, a missionary who has served three years in Nairobi, Kenya. She helped in saying that we should be global Christians. Consequently, we went to see her, support her and established a bond there with the church. Then there is Rev. Gerald Robinson, who joined our church who has a passion for mobilization. He's coming back now from India with a team. So, I have a lot of good help. I've been at Fort Foote for 19 years so over time that passion has grown.

If there was a particular group of people that the Lord has laid on your heart, which group would that be?

It would be pastors. I want to help pastors and this is not for the faint of heart. I certainly have not arrived and it's by the grace of God that I have been at this one church for 19 years. It's a journey and we really do need one another. Sometimes we serve the people but we end up lonely and isolated... but if we can get the heart healthy, it will push the blood to the other parts of the body.

What are the unique challenges of ministering in the DC area?

God has been so good. People are so comfortable. What is the urgency? Especially in Fort Washington, they live pretty (well). We (have) the two car garages, the Beamer, the Mercedes, and the SUV. Life is just good. So what's with all the urgency? It don't take all that. We're just at ease in Zion. Thinking and acting as if the rest of the world lives the way we do. I say come with us for a minute on a mission and you (will) find that the sad reality is that the rest of the world does not live the way that we do. They'd be happy to live in your garages. This one room would be a mansion in some places in Africa and Jamaica and now even in New Orleans. Sharing with them Luke 12:48, which says, "To whom much is given, much is required." I said, "We've got to share." And so that would be the challenge. We are so comfort- oriented and I like stuff too but at least share. We can be wise with our stewardship but let's not be selfish.

What is your favorite scripture?

My favorite scripture would be Philippians 3:14. That's one of the challenges I have to guard myself against. There's so much to be done. You work 16 hours and there are still needs unmet, things that need to be done but somehow you have to find some type of God-given balance. One preacher said that a good pastor should have the heart of a child, the mind of a scholar and the hide of a rhinoceros. So we have to press to be the best for the glory of God.

My Passion Is...The Gospel Community



Rev. Amy Butler, Pastor
Calvary Baptist Church
Washington, D.C.

Favorite scripture: Matthew 22:37

Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

If there was a word, a phrase, that describes what the Lord has laid on your heart as your passion, what would you say that is?

If I had to use one word I would say community. If I used a phrase I would say "gospel community." I don't know about you, but I, personally, have been really disillusioned with the church as an institution from time to time and I just feel that the gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to a higher standard. If we could somehow manage to create the kind of community that was actively living and breathing the gospel, how transformative would that be? That is just my passion. I love being a part of creating it and being a part of it and seeing it happen-- it's so fun! It's everything that I had hoped for.

How has that passion translated to your ministry within your church?

Calvary is in the middle of transformation. Basically we were a congregation--historically large congregation--that has started rebuilding from the ground up. Some of the hallmarks of our community are diversity on every level. We have people of all theological viewpoints. We have people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. And, this was a dream of mine for the gospel community to reflect the whole body of Christ. But, it is excruciatingly hard to live in community with people when you don't understand each other. So my job as pastor has been sort of holding our feet to the fire and saying, "Is this what we really believe in? Is this what we really want to see happen? Can the gospel of Jesus Christ create something different here than what we see on the outside? If so, then we are going to have to slug it out and walk through this together. That has been the challenge and the joy of gospel community at Calvary.

If there were a particular group of people that the Lord has laid on your heart, who would you say that group is?

I wouldn't say that I went out and searched for these people but I'm finding more and more that Calvary has become the last stop on the way out the church door. I have had it with the church, I mean done. This institution I grew up in and loved has hurt me so many times, has not been a prophetic voice. It's been a place of racism and division and I have not been accepted here and I have not found the love of Christ in this place. And I feel like my call is to say, "Okay, one more try. Just give it one more try and come on

over and let's see if we can really live in gospel community together." So, I feel like I'm called to this marginalized group of people who are about to give up on the institutional church and are finding new opportunities to experience the gospel community.

What would you say are some of the unique challenges ministering in this area?

When I first came here, one of my colleagues said you know you will do twice the work for half the return. Why? Because people have these insane schedules, these oppressive commutes and people are so transient here. They come in for one political cycle and then they're gone and so it's hard to build established, deep relationships and rich community in this kind of transient city. Marketing is really important. There are tons of really great people who sleep in on Sunday morning. There is no cultural expectation to go to church in downtown D.C. What we're serving up on Sunday morning has to be excellent, it has to be different, it has to be life-giving and hopeful and it has to be worth getting up in the morning. So, this has been primarily my challenge-- the transient nature of this area and people's hectic schedules.

What's your favorite scripture?

Matthew 22, I have to say is hands down my favorite part of the New Testament. It's Jesus talking about the greatest commandment in verse 37. The Pharisee and the Scribes were all on Him about tell us what to do and he said, First love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your mind and then go love your neighbor as yourself. And I told my people...that that's enough to keep us busy. At the end of the day, those are the mandates of the gospel that call us to action and faith and so that would have to be my favorite.

My Passion Is...Mission and Ministry



Rev. Joel S. Hawthorne, Pastor
Montgomery Hills Baptist Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

Favorite Scripture: Romans 8:38-39

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If there was a word or phrase or brief description of what you feel has been your passion, your call, your purpose in life, (this is outside of your church-- just you) what would you say that would be?

Well, it's two-fold. For me its mission and ministry and as a part of that helping people discover and use their gifts in ministry. I've always believed we exist for the sake of others. In fact, the thing that I always tell my church, and it's a quote from someone else, is "new life comes to us on its way to someone else." That's what we're about mission and ministry. That's my passion and I'm trying to make it the church's passion.

How is that you're attempting to use this passion and make it happen in your church?

For our church, we take very seriously the Great Commission to go and make disciples and we take very seriously the great commandment to love God and neighbor. So we've tried to incorporate that into our mission statement, statement of purpose, which for our church is to make Montgomery Hills Baptist Church a place where all people can belong and grow and serve. That's our shortened version of the mission.

Is there a particular group of people that the Lord has laid heaviest on your heart?

Personally, heaviest on my heart are the poor and the hungry—especially children and youth. That's what lays heaviest on my heart. But there are others and I think this goes for our church, too. We try to reach out to (in recent years) those who have been victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. We've sent teams down to Baton Rouge, LA. We've helped build homes and it's been a blessing for us. We've also just provided space, recently, so that we could reach out to French-speaking African immigrants. They're starting a new church in our space and we're pleased to be a part of that.

What would you say was the most unique challenge of ministering in this area?

Trying to reach out to believers but also to reach out to the unchurched in a day and age like ours where the traditional way of doing church is in transition—it's in such flux right now. I think that's the real challenge. As part of that, I think we all have a tendency to be kind of long-range churches and we need to remember that we are all in this together. That's why the DC Convention is so important because we need to have that venue where we can fellowship together and also join together in ministry and mission. And the DC Convention is a tremendous resource to enable us to pull all of our gifts and all of our resources together so that we can reach out to others.

Do you have a favorite scripture?

It's Romans 8:38-39. Who can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus? That's my story and I'm sticking to it!

My Passion Is...*Never Give Up!*



Rev. Samuel Rozolem, Pastor
Nations United Baptist Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

Favorite Scripture: Philippians 4:13

" I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

What phrase would you use to describe your passion?

The phrase would be "never give up." Don't give up! I won't give up on you, don't give up on what I'm asking you to do. That is the phrase that sticks with me the most. Don't give up!

Why is that?

Because God never gives up on me. I have stumbled many times and many times failed, but He never gave up on me. That is a phrase that motivates and steers my heart to get up and keep trying—do it again!

How has that been translated into the ministry within your church?

It's been the machine that moves me forward with the challenges in the ministry, with all the obstacles and visions and dreams. The whole spectrum of the ministry.

If you had to identify a group of people that the Lord has given you a passion for, what group would that be?

People from different cultures, different races and multi-ethnic people. That's who God has been steering in my heart for a long time. I always feel like I'm moving towards this group of people—I guess it is people like me.

What are the unique challenges of ministering in the DC Metropolitan area?

Too much work and not enough workers (laughs). This is one of them. The biggest challenge, in the area, for the group that I'm reaching out to, is that this area offers too many things 'of this world.' It is a challenge to compete and show people that life is more than what you see with your eyes—house, cars, titles, possessions and stuff like that. Apart from the lack of workers it is to show people that the greatest treasures are not in Washington, DC, but in heaven.

What is your favorite scripture?

I have so many of them. My favorite is the one that I need at the moment. If I needed encouragement, then that is my favorite. If I am happy and I need to praise the Lord, I have a favorite scripture for that. When I'm worried—I have a different one. The one that I have used the most is in Philippians 4 because it tells me that I should not be worried about anything but in everything I have to go to the Lord, pray and present to Him my requests, and He will hear me. He will take care of it. And, He will give me peace.

My Passion is...*the love of Jesus Christ*



Dr. C. Duh Kam
Pastor, Chin Baptist Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

Favorite Scripture: John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

What is your passion?

My passion is the love of Jesus Christ, touching my heart. Before I committed my life to the ministry, I was a teacher. I wanted to improve my English skills in my country during my teaching in [the] government

school. I was born in a Christian family, but I wasn't really touched by the love of God. Only when I read the English Bible to improve my English skills was I touched by the word of God. That is why I later committed my life to the Lord.

How does that passion come out in the church you're in?

As I experience the love of Christ, even when I preach, I like to touch people's heart by the Word of God. Most of my sermons consist of touching people's live with the love of Jesus Christ. I like it when people are experiencing the love of God... in the church. I like for them to participate in our church worship service as a part of Christ's body that experiences the love of Christ.

Would you say that there is a particular group of people that the Lord has laid heaviest on your heart?

Really, I am fine with anybody. I know that everybody has been created by God and God is our creator and so everybody has God's own image. When I talk to some of the people I feel I am talking to people who have the image of God. I like to be positive and inclusive of other people. Also, in my church, even though we are from one country and from one ethnic group, we still have differences in our church and I try to find the center and Christ is the center.

Would you say that there are unique or special challenges to ministering here in Washington, D.C.?

My church is a refugee church. The Chin people are fleeing our country because of religious persecution practiced by our Burmese Unity dictators. I have over 500 members now and most of them are refugees from Burma. Now we are working and helping them. It has been a lot of work. Even though I am pastor, I am a social worker. Most of my work is social work to help them go to the clinic, the human services department and try to find out about immigration and many other issues. Sometimes, there are interpretation issues if they don't speak English. I help them by interpreting whatever is necessary. So my church has these kinds of challenges. But, the good thing is that we are all Christians and committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. So even when we have some challenges and burdens, these are good challenges and good burdens. I have a very good youth group too. There are about 40 young people under the age 25 and they help out and sing in the church choir. This is an encouragement to me in ministry because of the type of political issues in our country. For example, Washington DC is the capital and I can meet with anybody. I can meet with people who are working for relief organizations and I can speak to some of my people in Burma. Once, I had the chance to go to the White House to talk to the Special Assistant to the President, Mr. Tim Goeglein, with some of the other service organizations like World Relief, Christian Freedom International and Jubilee Campaign. Also, when our country faced difficult times, for example, when Buddhist Monks took the streets and demonstrated against our government, we went to the Burmese Embassy in Washington, D.C. We also went to the Chinese Embassy and the Indian Embassy. They are our neighboring countries and we asked them not to support our Burmese military dictators. So, D.C. has helped me in the Lord's ministry and for that I am very grateful.

My Passion is... *Relationships*



Rev. James Tiefel
Pastor, First Baptist Church
Camp Springs, Maryland

Favorite Scripture: Mark 10:45

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

What is your passion?

Relationships—that’s where the gospel started and I think that’s the only way it’s going to go on now. I served as a missionary for about 18 years in Europe and I saw a lot of churches that had been built up by state churches and the accusation by most of the unbelieving population that they were empty was very accurate. Now for those people to come to know the truth and the hope and the love and the joy that I have, somebody’s going to have to love them into it. They’re not going to be able to preach it. Those people aren’t going to come into the church; believers are going to have to go out and rub shoulders with them, commit their lives to them and make an investment in personal relationships with them.

How have you taken that and translated that into your current ministry within your church?

I think it translates very well. My wife and I have tried to make a goal for a long, long time to have more friends outside the church than we do inside the church. It doesn’t always work out. This society is a little bit different than Finland where we lived for 10 years. It was a little bit easier to have contact outside the church because we didn’t have so many demands from the church and I wasn’t the pastor so that freed me up a little bit. But we’ve also tried to teach our people the same thing and to model that for them and help them understand that it’s okay to bring someone who is not a believer into our church. It’s okay to be in their home. It’s okay to fellowship with them. It’s okay to socialize with people even if there are some things that they’re not necessarily comfortable with, as long as it’s not getting them into trouble. That’s the way those people are going to see the Christ that is supposed to be living in and through us. We also try to model this in our deacon ministry. You don’t have to be a church member to be assigned a deacon. Somebody who has visited with us for a while, we ask for permission and if they’ll let us, we’ll put their name in our directory and we’ll assign a deacon to them so that we can stay in contact with them and meet needs when they come up. Not everybody agrees to that but you’d be surprised with how many do. I think they’re looking for that kind of contact. One good thing about it is that it doesn’t cost the church anything. There are a lot of things a church can do without it costing a lot of money but it takes some real education of people and I guess if there was a second passion that would have to be it—teaching. I think a lot of Christians don’t really know what they believe and that gets us all into trouble.

If there was a certain group of people that the Lord has laid on your heart, which group would that be?

Any person that steps into my realm of influence. That idea really hit me from a book that I read authored by a former Seminary professor, Dr. Oscar Thompson, The book is called ***Concentric Circles of Concern*** and he outlined seven circles in which I have a major influence with people; my immediate family, my extended family, friends, neighbors, work associates and finally the person that I might meet once in my life. But for the moments that I am with them whether it’s five minutes on a plane or someplace else, I’m supposed to have an impact on them—I’m supposed to be, maybe for some of them, the only representation of Jesus Christ that they get. So, I’d have to say that that would be my group of people and some of those people would be in the same groups that my church members are so we get a double, triple, quadruple whammy with some of them. They get hit from three or four sides and that’s the idea.

Why the Mickey Mouse tie?

First of all, I think it goes well with the suit. My wife has taught me to have a great eye for fashion. The second reason is that my daughters bought me this tie and they have kept me supplied in neat little ties over the years. I take it as a personal message to myself, no matter how big or important or how photogenic I think I am, when it comes right down to it I’m just another guy with a squeaky voice and big ears and that kind of keeps me humble. It reminds me not to believe my own press—not all the bad or all the good—kind of look for the middle of the road.

What are the unique challenges that you face ministering in the DC metropolitan area?

I think the pace of the lifestyle here doesn't allow a lot of time for people to really slow down and think about major issues in their lives. I think they're wrapped up in their economic struggles, they're wrapped up in their career, and they're wrapped up in getting through traffic. It's never surprised me that that 11 a.m. Sunday morning people have difficulty staying awake because it's the first time in the week they've sat down and are quiet and they're not being entertained by television. I think the second thing is that our world has become quite cynical. It doesn't have to be that way but I don't think there are a lot of people that are living and experiencing true hope. To communicate that in a way that is not just some catch phrase or some little personalized idiosyncrasy or some little words that I filled out just to make people feel good—to really demonstrate and communicate that to a world that doesn't want to believe me is a challenge. Too many people have lied to them and they're not willing to listen to anybody and everybody and they shouldn't. But that brings me back to relationships—you have to build that, you have to earn the right to be heard.

My Passion is... *Revitalizing Churches in Distress*



Rev. Dr. Duncan McIntosh
Pastor, First Baptist Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

Favorite Scripture: Philippians 1:6

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

What is your passion?

My passion is to revitalize churches that are dispirited and in distress. My view is that the church is the body of Christ on Earth. I certainly don't want to see the body of Christ lying limp and lifeless. All churches go through a life cycle—it's a matter of how we help them discover where they are in their life cycle and how they can break out. My passion is to help 2nd generation churches become 1st generation churches. I have had that passion for years, and it comes out in service as both pastor and teacher.

How do you then take that passion and translate it to the church you're working with now?

First, I have to get in touch with my own spiritual life. I must be **alive** in my spirit. Then, I have to interact with my context. I have to become a part of that congregation, to live and to study the situation... In some cases, I find you have to identify some set of dysfunction in order to open the congregation for God's healing.

I can model for them a vision, but it is best to help them to catch their own vision. This is the excitement of leadership—preaching, guiding, modeling. You have to work at this every day, taking steps forward as well as some backwards. It is like a dance, a little waltz. Leadership, in this way, is never straightforward. You are constantly zigzagging back and forth, rounding up some who are off to the side, moving the whole group forward toward a larger goal. I have to help congregational members to sense and embrace the developing work of God.

What would you say is the group of people you have a heart for?

Primarily, I have a heart for the church. In the particular church I have been serving, it has been the 90 year olds. Ministry to this group is strategic, for they will give permission to the younger generations of members to follow my leadership. I am pastor to all the people, but these advanced in age need my care—

through visits and prayers. They are convincing their younger family and friends, who are in their 70s now, to follow my leadership. Ultimately, we have to fill the nursery through young families. We do see now a whole new group of people coming in, catching the excitement of what is ongoing.

A second major emphasis is on diversity. First Baptist, Silver Spring is no longer mono-cultural. Once it was the big church on the corner with 1,500 members, but when I came, it was down to 60 members. Four congregations were meeting in the building: one the remnants of the original group; one Hispanic; one Caribbean; and one, diplomats and bureaucrats. They all loved one another, but they had no unity. They ministered to one another, but it was not an integrated congregation. Rather, it was four separate groups. I began helping to create a single identity, one recognizing the first generation of immigrants and their countries of origin. We have 53 nationalities represented at FBC, Silver Spring today.

Another significant effort was to change the diversity of the staff. It was amazing to see how God opened the door for this change! The church had already changed from a suburban to an urban congregation, but it had not recognized this. The lack of diversity on the staff said that everyone was a generalist. Suburban churches need ministers who are generalists (ministers of everything), but urban churches need specialists. God brought the church to see staff in a new way. Now we have a staff of five persons, all specialists, none of them full-time. Three staff members preach in rotation. If the church went back to me preaching every Sunday, I think they would fire me. They have begun to realize that we are developing something unique.

Now, First Baptist, Silver Spring is beginning to live something that they never have lived before, and they are excited about it.

My Passion is... Service



Rev. Eldridge Spearman
Pastor, Mt. Jezreel Baptist Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

In his own words...

I am like the Apostle Paul who records in Galatians, "I've been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (2:20)

A fundamental principle that I am really hung up on is humble service—the gospel of John, chapter 13, that's my favorite scriptural passage. Two elements really strike me about that passage: humble service and sacrificial love. We are humble servants—verse 14. Jesus made it clear that I've come not to be served but to serve. So, I am really passionate about service among the believers and within our congregation and with myself as well. This service requires sacrifice and humility. Jesus, on his knees, washed all 12 pair of feet. I have to remember that because sometimes folks make you upset and angry. But Jesus washed Judas' feet, though he was going to betray Him. He washed Peter's feet, though he was going to deny Him. He washed James, John and Thomas' feet, though they were going to doubt Him. He washed their feet.

Service is one element and secondly, love. In John 13:34 Jesus says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you..." I love the end of the first verse of chapter 13 in the King James translation. It says that Jesus loved them to the end and that's a powerful thing. So again, humble service but also a God-like love that calls us to be accepting of everyone and everyone's potential and also being able and willing to sacrifice for the love of Christ, the love of God.

Preaching the Gospel to the World...

The Great Commission calls us to make disciples everywhere. Not just this particular location or particular group. The evidence of our congregation's broad attitude and approach is through our missions. We are not just concerned about home missions—people in our community and our neighborhood. But we are also concerned about people like those in Louisiana and Texas who were affected by Hurricane Katrina. We also have a ministry and we connect with partners in Guyana, Liberia, Uganda, Kenya and in South Africa. We just developed a new partnership in India where we are helping a pastor distribute Bibles. We have a connection to a minister in Poland through our minister of music, who recently returned from a missionary trip there. This connection has allowed us to share the gospel through music; to use music as a tool to attract persons to hear the gospel of Christ. We take the mandate of Christ around the world—it's global.