



The Associations
Judson, Stewart, & Truett

Monthly Update

DOM RETIRES — RETURNS TO FIRST PASTORATE



By Connie Davis Bushey, News Editor, Baptist and Reflector

DOVER — It might sound like something he planned, but he wasn't thinking about retirement — at age 61, said William Gray, director of missions, Judson, Stewart, and Truett Baptist associations. Yet “the Lord clearly called me” to be pastor of Bear Spring Baptist Church here.

He can't do both, according to the bylaws of the associations he serves as DOM, so he announced his retirement as DOM after 30 years.

The decision may sound like something he planned because Bear Spring Baptist is the first church he pastored. So his ministry has come full circle. He will retire when a DOM is called or by July 2017. Gray explained that he was praying about the church and its need for a pastor, as he does for all of the churches in the three associations when they are without a pastor.

He started thinking about Bear Spring and wanting to pastor there but caught himself. He might “get away with it” he said, because of his long tenure and good relationships in the area, but he would lose his integrity, and “if you lose your integrity, you've lost everything.”

He doesn't believe in asking the Lord often for signs, but he did ask the Lord to show him clearly what to do. Just 30 minutes later the deacons of Bear Spring Baptist arrived at his office. One of them looked at Gray and explained that though it might seem crazy, they felt the Lord directing them to ask him to serve the church as pastor.

It was the confirmation he was seeking.

“Now I get to put into practice all I have been telling these pastors and training them to do,” noted Gray with a smile. That usually involves efforts to revitalize their churches and connect to their communities, he added.

“In this day and age, being a CEO of a church doesn't work here. It may work in Nashville but not in rural middle Tennessee,” he explained.

Despite the challenges, “I love pastoring,” he noted. Before serving as a DOM he pastored small churches as a bivocational pastor “and grew them” so they could better support him and his family, he added.

Gray served as pastor of four small churches, two in Kentucky, where he is from. Besides Bear Spring Baptist, where he began his ministry at age 20, he also served in Tennessee at Midway Baptist Church in Dover. On serving as a DOM for the past 30 years, Gray, who was the youngest DOM to serve at the time at age 29, noted that “there’s a lot more to it than people think.” He serves 54 churches in nine counties with one church located as far away as 90 miles from his office.

The job also requires a lot of evening meetings because 87 percent of those churches have bivocational pastors who have other jobs. That situation is not going to change soon because of the escalating cost of medical insurance, he added.

All of this transition will be difficult, said Gray, as he must become “less and less” so the next DOM can be accepted as leader.

What is making the transition easier are several other good gifts from God, said Gray.

Of course, he will enjoy spending more time with his family, including his wife Linda and son who has special needs. He also will enjoy doing something different, he reported.

And Bear Spring Baptist already is blessing him, said Gray.

He is surprised that the young adults at the church are relating to him. He has been able to revamp the Sunday School, which has drawn more people — up from 30 to 50. Bear Spring also has increased in worship from 50 to about 80 each Sunday morning.

He has had to deal with some difficulties. He has advised some people not to join the church by leaving their current church because of their relationship.

Gray explained that he is way ahead of most others who would pastor the church because he knows the church.

“I have no doubt that any church can grow, but it takes work,” said Gray. Church revitalization also requires discernment, he added. “What works at one church won’t work for another. ...

“The church has already been so good to me,” Gray said.

Executive Board Meetings

Stewart Assoc: Jan. 8th at 2:30PM at Grace BC

Judson Assoc: Jan. 21st at 9:00AM (Breakfast at 8:30AM), at Judson Office

Truett Assoc: Jan. 23rd at 7:00PM (Meal at 6:00PM) at FBC McEwen

2016 Minute Books & 2017 Calendars

Now available online in PDF Format at:

www.jstba.com/downloads.htm

- From the Churches:

Yellow Creek Baptist Church, Cumberland City:

- *Christmas with the Joylanders*, Wed. Dec. 14th, 6:30PM (flyer attached)
- *Christmas Pageant*, Sun. December 18th, 4PM

Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Hurricane Mills:

- *Christmas Caroling*, Dec. 14th
- *Christmas Fellowship*, Dec. 18th

First we would like to ask prayers for our Pastor, Bro. Buddy Mullinax, he has not been feeling very well. We would also like to ask for prayers for Mr. Hank Cathey, he is 94 years old and is a faithful member of our church. He had to have major surgery on his foot. December 14 we will be going Christmas Caroling at the nursing homes in Waverly and then we will be enjoying pizza at Lance's.

December 18 we will have our Christmas Fellowship Meal after morning worship. At 6:00 pm we will have the Christmas play and Santa will be there. We at Cedar Grove would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!

Liberty Baptist Church, White Bluff:

- *Christmas Add-a-Dish Meal*, Dec. 18th, following morning service
- *Christmas Day Service*, Dec. 25 - 10:00

We are also supporting angels from Creekwood High School's Angel Tree. We are also supporting a family from Feed The Bluff. We will be providing food baskets to these families too.

FBC, White Bluff:

- *Drive Thru Nativity Scenes* Dec. 20th from 6 to 8 PM (flyer attached)

Three Rivers Fellowship, Waverly:

We will be assembling Christmas Food baskets on December 10th and then delivering these on this same date.

Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Fairview:

God is doing miraculous things at Mt. Zion Baptist Church since the end of September. He has blessed us with a new pastor, Bro. Chris Lusk and his wife, Sis. Jessica and their beautiful baby boy, Josiah.

We thought that it was time for the ministry to end at this small country church, but God has shown us that we weren't paying attention to His desires. The Lord blessed us one day with a surprise visitor, who was looking for another church and found us by mistake. Since she started coming we have added a total of three new members, of which she is the last one to be baptized on December, 18, 2016. Right before the Thanksgiving holiday, Bro. Lusk and his wife asked to move their membership to become full time members of Mt. Zion. Sometimes the devil creeps into our midst and makes us believe that he is in charge. The hardest thing is to remember that no matter what happens, GOD is the one that is truly in control. Please continue to remember us in your prayers as we strive to add more people to our congregation.

Hurricane Creek Baptist Church, Stewart:

- *Revival & Solemn Assembly*, January 1-8, 7PM (flyer attached)

Our little church gathered enough supplies to fill 75 shoe boxes for Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child. We also gathered supplies to fill 5 Thanksgiving food boxes for families in the area.

WMU women from the church and a few good men also fixed a meal for the BCM at Austin Peay serving over 100 young men and women. Our church enjoys doing this twice a year. Such a blessing to all. Filled 3 boxes to send to soldiers overseas. Two which are members of Hurricane Creek. Christmas Program on December 18th at 5pm with finger foods & fellowship after. Most important 6 people were saved and accepted Christ as their savior!

Upcoming Ecuador Mission Trips

In June we will be leading 3 mission trip to Sigchos, Ecuador. These trips will vary in duration. A two week trip & two, eight day trips:

June 6-20

June 6-13

June 19-26

Interested? Contact Bro. Joe: joe@jstba.com or (931) 627-0683

East TN Fires Relief Fund

Make an online contribution to TN Disaster Relief.

GIVE NOW

<http://tndisasterrelief.org/contributions/>

Christmas with The Joylanders

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14TH AT 6:30PM
 SUPPER AT 5:45PM

This will be THE Musical Christmas Concert of the Year in Middle Tennessee! The Joylanders are incredible musicians and even more talented vocally. They will sing all your favorite Christmas songs from many genres of music: Gospel, Country, Jazz, Traditional, Contemporary, and A Cappella. Don't miss it!

For more info please call 931-289-2801
www.YellowCreekBaptistChurch.com

Yellow Creek BAPTIST CHURCH
 4506 Ellis Mills Road
 8/10 of a mile off Hwy. 13 at the Montgomery/Houston County Line

DRIVE THRU NATIVITY SCENES
 At
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH WHITE BLUFF
 4979 Hwy 70E
 Dec. 20th 6 to 8pm
 CD Player Preferred In Vehicle

A Shepherd's Staff

J Good Shepherd
 John 10: 11
 Great Shepherd
 Hebrews 10: 20,21
 Our Shepherd
 Psalms 23
esus

2017 Solemn Assembly

Location: Hurricane Creek Baptist Church, Stewart, TN
 Date: January 1, 2017 thru January 8, 2017

A week-long event planned to bring us to a deeper relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ in the new year.

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| January 1: | 11am | Worship service/Fellowship meal |
| January 2: | 7pm | Day of fasting/Family gathering |
| January 3: | 7pm | Prayer service |
| January 4: | 7pm | Praise and singing service |
| January 5: | 7pm | Revival |
| January 6: | 7pm | Revival |
| January 7: | 7pm | Revival |
| January 8: | 11am | Solemn Assembly & Charge to the church. |

During this week-long event televisions and computers will be turned off. Cell phones will be used for calls only. No FaceBook for the week, only our faces in the Book.

For more information call 931-232-7870 or 931-387-4840

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 LOTTIE
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100% of your gifts help
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Lottie Moon's Viewmont Home
Charlottesville, VA / circa. 1937

LORI MCDANIEL |

Lottie Moon: The Rebel I Want to Be

Lottie Moon. I want to be like her, but I didn't realize how much until I dove into her life story.

You could draw a line in the sand, mention the name Lottie Moon, and people who revere her will move to one side of the line while people whispering, "Who's that?" will migrate to the other. I had one foot in each camp.

My current church is in the "who's that?" category. Most people at my church, planted fifteen years ago, did not grow up thoroughbred Southern Baptists. While they participate in and give to global missions, they're not familiar with Lottie. But I grew up in a church that revered her, and I raised money for missions in my rice-bowl-shaped piggy bank to give to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Her photos in a Victorian-laced collar might give the impression she was a stuffy school marm who adhered to strict rules. Yet, she was playfully defiant, poking fun at the church until she chose to follow Christ at age eighteen.

And she was ambitiously smart and became one of the first women in the South to earn a master's degree.

Whether you're already familiar with her story or this is your first introduction, you'll find that her somewhat terse language flows from a contagious, tenacious heart for God's mission.

WHY I WANT TO BE LIKE LOTTIE

1. She confidently believed that salvation was personal and so was the Great Commission.

The gospel came through Christ to us to save us, but not to stop with us. We are saved for God's glory and then appointed to declare his glory. "Should we not press it home upon our consciences that the sole object of our conversion was not the salvation of our own souls, but that we might become coworkers with our Lord and Master in the conversion of the world?" Lottie asked.

2. She daringly called for an insurrection in status quo mission thinking.

If the Great Commission is for all believers, then we must personally answer the question, "Am I going or sending?"

- **She challenged young men:** "Ask not if it is his duty to go to the heathen, but if he may dare stay at home. The command is so plain: 'Go.'"
- **She challenged pastors:** "Knowing the loud call for laborers in the foreign field, will you settle down with your home pastorates? So many could be found to fill your places . . . so few volunteer for foreign work."
- **She challenged women:** "Thousands of women will never hear the gospel until women bear it to them."

3. She unapologetically asked believers to give.

Although salvation is free, sending people where the gospel has not been shared has a cost. Giving to God's mission is an investment. Lottie's questions create a jolt meant to stir hearts to an urgent need. "Why this strange indifference to missions?" she wrote. "Why these scant contributions? Why does money fail to be forthcoming when approved men and women are asking to be sent to proclaim the 'unsearchable riches of Christ' to the heathen?"

4. She unwaveringly obeyed God and abandoned comfort to live in a hard place.

The eternal reality that people were dying without hearing of Jesus trumped the reality of living in a place devoid of convenience and comfort. Living in China during political upheaval and among people who "had an aversion to foreigners" were mere splinters of the difficulties she faced. Yet she wrote from a village, "The circumstance would suggest an utter absence of comfort, yet we find ourselves more than contented."

5. She didn't shy away from pleading for a legion of workers to be sent.

Lottie didn't merely play at missions but confidently persuaded others to consider the reality of people going to an eternal hell. "We implore you to send us help. Let not these heathen sink down into eternal death without one opportunity to hear that blessed gospel, which is to you the source of all joy and comfort," she wrote.

Lottie defied the limits of generational, cultural, and missional norms for the sake of the gospel. I want to be so bold. With nearly three billion people who have never heard of Jesus, we should dare be the same kind of rebel, disrupting casual mission thinking and ambitiously resolved to get the gospel to all nations at all costs.

I'll unapologetically ask the same words as Lottie: "Is not the festive season when families and friends exchange gifts in memory of the Gift laid on the altar of the world for the redemption of the human race, the most appropriate time to consecrate a portion from abounding riches and scant poverty to send forth the good tidings of great joy into all the earth?"

Let us go. But if we stay, let us give, so that others may be sent.

**All quotes are from Lottie's letters written while she lived in China.*

Contact us at:

Mail: PO Box 115, Dover, TN 37058

Phone: Bro. Gray (931) 237-3856 - Bro. Joe (931) 627-0683

Email: william@jstba.com or joe@jstba.com
