



# The Williams Bell

Williams Memorial Presbyterian Church  
4700 Beatties Ford Road  
Charlotte, NC 28216-2845

Vol. 56

*May/June 2018*

No.5/6

## **Welcome Pastor John and his wife Joy!**

*We asked him to submit an article to tell us more about his journey.*

I was born at my grandparent's home in Mary Alice, Kentucky. My grandfather also happened to be the only general practitioner in the area. I used to hear my father's father say that came to know Jesus Christ as Savior on their mother's lap and at their father's knee. I remember going to church every Sunday with the family. Sometimes, after church my mother's father would take up to a restaurant top of Pine Mountain. My brother and sister and I spent our early years ranging up and down the mountain valleys, playing in creeks with our cousins. During the winter, the skies in the coal camp turned grey, as acrid coal smoke rose from homes. The snow was often speckled with black coal dust.

My parents thought seriously about our future—our health and education. Schools were not good in Harlan County. Late one summer, they moved the family to Bradenton, Florida. My father began working as a counselor for Vocational Rehabilitation. I remember accompanying him when he would visit the homes of his clients. Many of them had been injured fighting in Europe, the Pacific, Korea and some from Viet Nam.

Our family joined First Presbyterian Church, near downtown. It was much larger than our former church, but the people were just as welcoming. My sister and I became active in the youth group and sang in the youth choir during the early service. It was there during Junior and Senior High School that I seriously began considering the ministry as a vocation. I saw the ministers live authentic Christian lives. They were not anywhere near perfect, but it seemed to me that they made a difference in the lives of people—young and old.

After graduating high school, I attended Stetson University. Although I tried to take a "break" from church, I couldn't. I'd somehow end up working with the youth and play guitar badly to residents of nursing facilities.

In 1976, still fresh from college and shortly before I was to begin seminary, I worked as a youth director at my home church. Jim McNaull, the associate pastor, told me that he thought God was calling me into the ministry, because I would work to integrate the youth who'd hang back into the

group. He said, I was a “circle-widener”. He said I could attend any seminary that I wanted and the church would help me. I asked Princeton? And he shook his head and said, “Any one you want, as long as it was Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA”. One afternoon at church, shortly before I left for seminary, I noticed a young woman struggling to start her car. She stood in the shade of a giant banyan tree across the street. I went over and offered her my assistance. She was beautiful. I learned that her mother, Shirley, was the church secretary. I cleaned the car’s badly corroded battery terminals and retightened them properly. The car started immediately. I asked the young woman her name. Joy Marie Rowe, she said. And I was in love. Then six years went by. She had her first serious spinal surgery. She finished college and began a theatre career. I finished seminary and was ordained. And yet, every time we drifted apart, we always happened to run into each other after Easter and Christmas. *In truth, I think that Shirley somehow arranged our happenstance meetings.* Later, I learned that she prayed to God every day that we one day marry. One day, we would.

Shortly after Joy and I became engaged early 1982, I told her that I loved her and would do so forever. I then quickly added, “Your life will never be boring”. Both things remain true. Joy has been my helpmeet and friend throughout my ministry. She has encouraged me during all the hard slogs. When I joined the Navy, she quietly packed and moved herself and our oldest daughter from Edinburgh, Scotland to a remote naval station in the Philippines along the South China Sea. I had the honor of working with sailors and marines there from 1985 to 1988. Most of time I led worship for the service personnel, civilians and their families at the base chapel. Other times, I would go into the jungle with the marines and celebrate the Lord’s Supper with them. I was tasked on a couple of occasions to organize Seabees to build bridges and schools for Filipinos in remote barrios or villages. On other occasions, I worked with missionaries to provide free medical care for their congregants. Sometimes, the base went on lockdown because of a coup attempt or revolution or the communist were breaching the base perimeter.

Toward the end of my tour, it occurred to me that God was constantly widening His circle and bringing in the lost, the unlovely, the sick, imprisoned, and the dying. He was using someone like me, my wife, the chapel congregation, the missionaries and local pastors, and their community to widen Christ’s Kingdom.

Eventually, I received orders and the family moved stateside. I worked another three years at the Naval Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida. This time I worked with service men and women with life threatening or severe mental illness. I worked with victims of domestic violence and accused murderers. One day, I ministered to a woman in the end stage of HIV and had developed severe dementia. Another day, I baptized an infant or officiated the wedding of two or three couples. Other days, when it was my turn to stay overnight at the hospital, I would be summoned to the room of a World War II veteran who was about to die.

-ii-

Eventually, Joy and I decided we had traveled enough and returned home to Bradenton, Florida. I was called to Whitfield Estates Presbyterian Church which faced Sarasota Bay along the Tamiami Trail. The church, which had begun as the first drive-in church in the nation, had long been struggling with declining membership and a fading mission. To reclaim the mission, the worship committee took charge. They repaired church’s stained-glass windows. They recruited an inspired organist/choir director. The buildings and grounds committee refurbished the sanctuary with their own labor. The church held string, organ, and piano recitals of classical sacred music. Church members wrote and acted in plays on Reformation Sunday and Holy Week. They organized and marched in the “Kirkin’ o’ the Tartan”. At Whitfield, the proclamation of the Word and Sacrament

became visual and aural. The education committee focused on a children's ministry which introduced the neighborhood children to the Bible for perhaps the first time. Whitfield had tapped into God's circle-widening.

-iii-

Several years ago, I experienced God's call again in a wonderfully new way. We were living in Texas at the time. This time our children had grown and begun lives and families of their own. One day, an elderly woman brought her son to my office. He shuffled in, each movement seemed agonizing and he could barely speak. I knew they were looking for some financial assistance, but something told me to listen and not turn them away. I learned he had developed ALS, Lou Gehrig's Disease, in midlife. He was uneducated and lived with his mother in a small dilapidated shack. He had applied for Social Security three times and had been turned down. He was receiving only minimal medical care and was within months of dying. I called my friend, Lyle Holin, who was the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in town. Somehow, we managed to get the sick man an appointment with a Social Security Administrative Judge. When the judge saw the man and heard his case, he ruled that he should receive full benefits and medical treatment. Later that week, Lyle approached me about pursuing my doctorate in Counselor Education and Supervision.

Joy and I prayed about it and asked God for guidance. We had scant resources, Joy was still struggling with illness, and yet, we both heard God's call for us to be circle-wideners. I applied to the PhD in Counselor Ed. at Texas A&M and was granted an interview. Normally, one must have a master's degree in counseling, psychology or social work. The interview committee accepted me into the program any way.

During those three years, I directed a community counseling clinic, directed master's level counseling students, and worked extensively with homeless veterans and military personnel who had develop PTSD. Afterwards, I worked as an assistant professor at the University of Louisiana at Monroe and facilitated PTSD groups for war veterans.

And yet, I missed serving a congregation. My calling is still as a pastor and to serve others in worship. From 2013-2016, I served First Presbyterian Church in Bastrop, Louisiana. Joy and I worshiped with them. I shepherded and taught them, and learned so much from them. In so many ways, they ministered to Joy and me and loved us unconditionally. When I went to teach at Montreat College and work on some arcane accreditation issue, it was wrenching to leave them. Now, two years later, you have called me to serve and love you as Christ would do. It's a humbling that you have entrusted me with this. I experience the same loving qualities of the church members of Williams Memorial as I did at the saints in Bastrop. You are a church with a similar mission—to engage in intentional circle-widening of bringing the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a sin-sick world.

**John-Nelson Pope**

**Williams Bell Deadlines** Our goal is to make the Bell available on the last Sunday of the month. In order to make that deadline please provide July/August Bell submissions by June 17th.

**Thank You** To all those who assisted in the face-lift of the choir room! - To Courtney Brown for picking out the paint; John Auten on setup duty; Kevin Auten, Mark Auten and Ted Auten for the actual painting. It really looks beautiful! Now is a great time to join the choir!

Billie McConnell

**Thank You** To all those that assisted with the move back to the sanctuary from polishing the silver to moving items back to the sanctuary. We appreciate all things that get done behind the scenes.

### May Birthdays

May 6 *Jon Leatherwood*                      May 22 *Marc Leatherwood*  
May 10 *Jonathan Fisher*

### June Birthdays

June 2 *Laura Stroupe*                      June 20 *Earl Leatherwood*  
June 10 *Michael Murray*                      June 25 *Jeannie Craig*  
June 14 *Adam Earnhardt*                      June 26 *Mark Auten*  
June 27 *Jane Setzer*



### Covered Dish Lunch May 6

There will be covered dish luncheon following worship on May 6. This is "Welcome Luncheon" for Pastor John and wife Joy. Meat will be provided. Please bring sides and dessert.

### Fun and Fellowship May 8

Fun and Fellowship will meet at the Chick-Fil-A outside Northlake Mall on Tuesday, May 8 at 11:30. Hope to see you there!

**Watch Found** in the window sill over the sink in the Fellowship Hall - So, if you are missing a ladies watch, call the church office or email [wmpcsecretary1885@yahoo.com](mailto:wmpcsecretary1885@yahoo.com).

**New Address:** Minnie Hamilton Carrington Place; 600 Fullwood Lane; Matthews, NC 28105

### Memorials Received:

In Memory of Ruth Reynolds:

Bobbie Reid                      Laura Stroupe                      Nancy Lewis  
CJ & Mary Phillips                      Ronald Hudgins                      GB & Olive Taylor (Jean)

## Yeshua Bible Study



The ancient Jews, living during the despised Roman occupation, two thousand years ago, knew Him as Yeshua. Yeshua is a name which means 'Salvation' in Hebrew.

Who is Yeshua? Yeshua is the same as Jesus Christ of the New Testament Bible, and the same as the Messiah which was prophesied to come through the Jewish people over and again in the Old Testament Bible which is known as the Tanakh to the Jews.

Are you interested in learning more about the historical Jesus and how He is still transforming the lives of people of all nations to this day? Won't you join me for a 5-week exploration of Yeshua, His life, teachings, ministry, sacrificial death and resurrection.

Presented by the late Dr. Oswald Hoffmann, Yeshua reveals ancient customs and beliefs with exceptional clarity and detail. This study moves across more than 2,000 years of history, from the time of Abraham through the efforts of the Jews to possess and hold the promised land, to the birth and life of Jesus. After viewing Yeshua, you will listen to Scripture reading with new insight and read familiar prophecies, psalms and parables with fresh appreciation.

This study will meet weekly on Wednesdays, beginning June 13 at the church. Exact time, room number, and possibly an alternative start date, will be announced later this month. Please do not hesitate to contact me for more information: [john-nelson.pope@montreat.edu](mailto:john-nelson.pope@montreat.edu) or 941.704.0561.

**Cook's Memorial Presbyterian Church's Men of the Church POOR MAN'S SUPPER** on FRIDAY, MAY 4, 2018 from 5-8pm in Fellowship Hall. The menu will be pinto beans, marinated onions, slaw & cornbread and they will be asking for monetary donations to cover your meal.

**In the event of an emergency or a phone tree request** please contact Pastor John, Cell 941.704.0561 or [john-nelson.pope@montreat.edu](mailto:john-nelson.pope@montreat.edu)

## **Volunteers & Helpers for 2018**

### **USHERS**

May: Kevin Auten, John Auten

June: Ty Leatherwood, Ted Auten

August: Lisa Fisher, Edith Morgan

October: Earl & Mary Leatherwood

July: Nancy Lewis, Amy Auten

September: Nathaniel Jones, Sarah Kiser

November: Marilyn Earnhardt, Alex Leatherwood

December: Ty Leatherwood, Jon Leatherwood

### **COLLECTION TABULATORS**

May: Mark Auten, Jon Leatherwood

June: Kevin Auten, Lisa Fisher

August: Don Fisher, Mark Auten

October: Edith Morgan, Amy Auten

July: Marc Leatherwood, Edith Morgan

September: Nancy Lewis, Kevin Auten

November: Bobbie Reid, Lisa Fisher

December: Don Fisher, Mark Auten

### **COMMUNION SERVERS**

May: Kevin Auten

June: Nancy Lewis

August: Lisa Fisher

October: Ted Auten

July: Amy Auten

September: Sarah Kiser

November: Fred Hunter

December: Jon Leatherwood

### **Prayer Request for:**

**Members and Friends...***Florence Alexander, Roy Baker, Hunter Davis, Andy Hassell, Dot Hoover, Janet Hubbard, Virgil Hubbard, Diane Keever, Don Parker, Nancy Skipper, James Watson, Bill Craig and Rev. Phillip Williams.*

**Members in the extended community ...***Doris Goodwin (Asbury Care Center), Dean Hall (Heritage of Cedar Rock, Mocksville), Mary Penninger (The Laurels), Minnie Hamilton, Lydia Pope.*

### **Those in military service**

US Army –*Sam Caldwell, Justin Jackson*      US Army Reserve – *Benjamin Glover*

US Army National Guard – *Cody Baker*      US Coast Guard – *Matthew Baker*

### **Addresses of loved ones in the military:**

*SPC Samuel Caldwell; 433 N.E. 21<sup>st</sup> Terrace; Homestead, FL 33033*

*Justin Jackson CMR-415 Box 7854 APO-AE-09114*

# The Williams Bell

Williams Memorial Presbyterian Church  
4700 Beatties Ford Road  
Charlotte, NC 28216-2845



## May/June 2018

Phone 704 392-8816

E-mail [wmpcsecretary1885@yahoo.com](mailto:wmpcsecretary1885@yahoo.com)

Sunday Schedule

10:00 am Sunday School

11:00 am Worship Service

### **Church Staff**

*John-Nelson Pope – Pastor*  
*Billie McConnell – Music Director*  
*Ted Auten – Custodian*  
~~~~~