



Southside Church of Christ
3499 Commerce Street
Grenada, Mississippi

WHAT KIND OF CHURCH IS THIS?

This is a publication especially for people who have wondered, "What kind of church is Southside?" It's a brief, but informative summary of who we are, where we came from, and what we're about.

Included is an 'interview' article with Dr. Bill Denton, Southside's preaching minister and Licensed Clinical Pastoral Counselor.

Southside strives to be a Christ-centered, disciple-making church. The warm, open atmosphere is reminiscent of old-fashioned family gatherings, where people find strength, comfort, and encouragement from brothers and sisters, and discover a place to belong and an identity to wear.

A CrossTies Ministry
SPECIAL ISSUE

What Kind of Church Is This ?

That's a fair question! After all, there are scores of churches in our community. One can find older denominations like Presbyterian or Episcopal churches. You can find energetic churches like the Pentecostals or the Assembly of God. Or you can find numerous popular Baptist churches. That's why it's fair to ask, "What about Southside?"

Southside is an independent, autonomous congregation affiliated with what is known as the churches of Christ. Our historical roots are deep in the American Restoration Movement, a loosely organized pioneer movement that arose during the early day of our nation's existence. We started as a unity movement with the impetus provided largely by ministers from the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist churches, among others. During those days, a great deal of animosity existed among the various denominations, and the early Restoration Movement leaders believed strongly that Christians could find unity by dispensing with creed books, catechisms, and church manuals, and returning to the Bible as the sole guide to faith, worship and Christian life. The effort was to exalt Christ alone as Savior and Lord.

We gratefully acknowledge the work of reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others, but the Restoration Movement operated under a belief that their work was unfinished. The goal was a real return to the scriptures, and while there is no single church that we hold up to imitate in all ways, there is the ideal of the church of Christ, the body of Christ, the people whom God has called to be His own that is presented in the New Testament. That was the goal then, and it remains our goal today.

Thomas and Alexander Campbell, both Presbyterian ministers came to America and though each developed ideas while separated from one another, they came to agree together that the strife and division of denominational Christianity could not possibly please the Lord. Many others found themselves seeking similar goals. Today, we stand in the tradition of wanting to avoid sectarianism and denominationalism, and simply be Christians, followers of Jesus Christ.

Thomas Campbell and The Declaration And Address

Campbell set forth principles that are still applicable today. Among them are the following:

1. That the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures. . . .
2. That . . . there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among [local congregation].
3. That. . . nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith, nor required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them, in the Word of God.
4. That. . . the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament church, as perfect a rule of the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for the worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament church. . . .
5. That. . . [no] human authority [has] power to impose new commands or ordinances upon the church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined.

There are other propositions, but these are a good summary of Campbell's wisdom and insight into the things that commonly cause religious division and animosity. Are we saying we're perfect and right and everyone else is wrong? No! We are only saying that like all believers who are struggling to follow Jesus as his disciples, we believe these are things that can help us avoid mistakes that hamper faith, while at the same time provide a positive framework for building strong personal and corporate faith, and making it possible to accomplish the church's mission in the world, both in our worship, our proclamation of the gospel to unbelievers, and a life that honors and glorifies God.

If We Have No Creed, What's Our Position?

That we have no formal creed does not mean we do not hold beliefs or that we don't think some things are important and worth emphasizing. The following may help, but it's a representative list, not a definitive list.

1. **Jesus is the only creed.** Our message is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. It's the only profession of faith we require of anyone.

2. **The church belongs to Christ.** Jesus came to build his church, and he did so by means of his death, burial and resurrection. We have no authority to change the scriptures, rewrite rules, alter membership requirements or usurp his place. The church is not a democracy.

3. **We seek unity.** We do that on the basis of God's word, not on human inventions.

4. **We involve ourselves in the constant task of reformation and restoration.** As much as possible we imitate the New Testament precedents. That explains why baptism is by immersion, Communion is celebrated every Lord's Day, our leaders are called elders, preaching focuses on Christ, and prayer is in Christ's name. Even our name intentionally identifies us as belonging to Christ.

5. **We are an apostolic church.** This means as Paul wrote in Eph. 2:20, that we are built on the founda-

tion of the apostles and prophets, with Christ himself the chief cornerstone.

6. **We are a thinking church.** This means we believe that our minds are intended to understand the mind of Christ through the inspired word of God.

7. **We are a feeling church.** We do not believe in a dry intellectualism, but that our worship of praise, prayer and song is done with heartfelt emotion.

8. **We are a sharing church.** We openly, willingly share our faith with others. We purposely invite others into our assemblies to share the experience with us. We also share our material blessings with those who have need, to glorify a benevolent God.

9. **We are a free church.** By that we mean that we have no denominational hierarchy to rule over us. Instead, we choose our own leaders, and support our own ministers, send our own missionaries. This is not isolationism, for we also seek to freely associate with other congregations to accomplish things too big for any one church.

10. **We are a growing church.** Growth happens in several ways. We grow because we believe in the evangelistic mission to the lost. We also grow spiritually, both as individuals and as a congregation as we learn and serve together.



Life Groups

An Opportunity
To Grow
And To Deepen Relationships

Our Life Group Ministry is an opportunity for every member to participate in a small group experience. Each Sunday night, Life Groups meet in the homes of our members. There is a devotional time, usually some kind of light meal or refreshments together, and ample time for fellowship. When there are five Sundays in a month, we combine our Life Groups on those 5th Sundays, usually meeting in the gym. On those nights, activities involve us all in devotional reading, group discussion, etc. We enjoy another "finger-food" meal time, then enjoy fellowship, games, or other activities. Both opportunities involve whole families, including children. It's truly "family time" at church!



An Active
Teen Group
Gives Our Youth
Opportunity For
Real Growth

Children's Church
Gives Kids The
Opportunity To
Learn And Worship
On Their Own Level



At Southside, We're Interested In Serving Everyone



Sunday School Classes
Are For All Ages

Southside's "A Cappella"
Singing Group Is A
Community Favorite





A “Question and Answer” Interview With Dr. Bill Denton

Q. *Can you tell us a little about yourself, your background, etc.?*

Bill. Sure. I was born and raised in Oxford, MS., where I graduated from High School, then attended Ole Miss for a couple of years. Unfortunately, Uncle Sam invited me to serve in the military, so I enlisted in the Air Force. I served for 7 ½ years, working in communications intelligence, and enjoyed assignments in Texas, Germany, Thailand and Japan. While I had preached some as a student at Ole Miss, it was after my wife and I married and we were stationed in Japan that I got really involved in teaching and preaching. In 1976, we decided to leave the Air Force, and I subsequently attended the Whites Ferry Road School of Biblical Studies in West Monroe, LA. Later, I was able to continue my studies while preaching full time, and most of that education was focused on Christian or Pastoral Counseling. I later received a Master of Theology degree from a Baptist seminary in Florida, and a Doctor of Ministry degree from the Theological University of America, a school associated with churches of Christ. I have served churches in Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, Kansas and Mississippi. Linda and I have two grown daughters and together they have presented us with six grandchildren.

Q. *Why did you begin preaching? Is it something you always wanted to do?*

Bill. No, actually, my being a preacher is a surprise to a lot of people, including me! When I was in High School, if you had asked me to give an oral book report, the best I could do was stumble over myself and hide. When I attended Ole Miss, I lived at the Christian Student Center, in the men’s dorm. One of the requirements was that we participate in daily devotionals and other spiritual activities at the Center. Some of us were encouraged to fill-in at outlying congregations around Oxford, and I was given the opportunity to speak at the Oxford Church of Christ on a few occasions. Those were truly experiences that tried the patience and good-will of the Christians who endured those sermons, but it did prove to me that it was possible to stand up before a group of people and not die immediately. Later, in Japan, Linda and I were among the “oldest” Christians there. I don’t mean by age, for we were all fairly young. It’s that we had been Christians longer than most of the others, and it put us in the position of using what we’d been taught growing up, attending Bible classes, etc. Love for preaching just grew.

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Can A Preacher Ride A Motorcycle?



Don’t be too surprised if you pull up in the church parking lot and see a dark, candy-apple red Honda cruiser parked near the office. That would be Bill Denton’s “ride.” Bill rode dirt bikes much earlier in life, but now that he has a little age on him, and slowed down a bit, he still enjoys a good motorcycle ride. He admits that not everyone thinks of preachers as motorcyclists, but Bill thinks that even preachers need to have hobbies and things that they enjoy. One of our teens proclaimed, “We have the coolest preacher in town!” Motorcycle riding has given Bill a chance to mix and mingle with other riders in the Grenada community, and occasionally it gives him an opportunity to talk about spiritual matters with some unlikely people. In the photo at right, Bill is breaking in his youngest grandson, “Bo,” to the feel of a motorcycle. We didn’t ask what Bill’s daughter (and Bo’s mother) thought about all this. On some days, you might be interested to find that the saddlebags contain a pile of books, or even a laptop computer. Fresh air and sunshine sometimes produce articles, sermons or Bible studies! Got a motorcycle of your own? Go ride with Bill.

Q. *When did you come to Southside?*

Bill. We moved to Southside in September, 2002.

Q. *Why did you accept the preaching position with Southside? Was there something that attracted you?*

Bill. As you know, churches of Christ are all independent, autonomous congregations, so each church must select its own preachers. To a large degree, both the church and the preacher must see a “fit” and it requires a mutual “choosing” of each other. We saw Southside as a church with an open, loving atmosphere. We also saw that there was a strong “family” concept and a great deal of mutual love and respect for people. We also saw that Southside was willing to engage the community in a way that not every church does. Without compromising beliefs, there seemed to be a view among the members and leaders at Southside that this church existed in a community of people, and that if there was going to be a viable ministry to those people, we had to take them where they were and not insist that they become like us or adopt our thinking before we would serve them. We have to go where people are, not sit around waiting for them to knock on our door.

Q. *There are a lot of questions today about a preacher’s position and philosophy, whether he is liberal or conservative, etc. How do you respond to those questions?*

Bill. I think labels are best used on products in the grocery store. They are seldom profitable for people. The terms “liberal” and “conservative,” are usually relative. In other words, if someone is left of you, they are

liberal, and if they are to the right of you, they are conservative. Theologically, I consider myself as fairly conservative. When it comes to some practical matters of programs, or ministry, or “how” we do some things, I’m probably on the liberal or progressive side. What I really strive to be is biblical. That’s enough for me, and I’ve learned a long time ago not to try to satisfy those who want you to classify you as conservative or liberal.

Q. *How does that view work out in your preaching?*

Bill. I believe strongly in understanding the Bible as it was written, and understanding it from the vantage point of what the original writers intended to say. I believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, that it is God’s message to man and not just a man-produced book. That leads to a conservative beginning point. But, we live in times different from the days in which the Bible was written. We struggle with problems and issues that were not so visible in centuries past. So, we’ve got to be able to connect the Book with the life we experience. We have to apply it to today’s problems. We don’t have to change the message to do that, but we might have to change how it’s communicated, and we might have to apply it to things unique to our times. Ministry must be flexible enough to serve the people you have, not the people you had.

Q. *Do you think that preaching is important today?*

Bill. Yes, I do. While people do not always realize or respect the importance of preaching, it has always been the proclamation of God’s word that has reached

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**A Ministry of Outreach
And Information
Designed to Connect
People With God
Through the
Cross of Jesus Christ**

CrossTies Ministry was started by Bill Denton in the mid-1990’s. From the beginning, it was designed to use the Internet to provide content to Bible students, ministers or teachers who needed resources for their own study or to help them teach others.

The cornerstone of CrossTies Ministry has always been Bill’s devotional article that is published weekly. It appears in Southside’s church bulletin, *Sidelines*, then it is sent to an email-subscription group that numbers into the thousands. Articles are frequently given additional life by being reprinted in other email groups, online e-zines, church bulletins across the country, local newspapers, and major religious publications.

people's hearts. The form or format of preaching may change from time to time, but preaching remains as one of the most confrontational, life-changing, motivational, and instructive activities around. The role of the preacher is probably far more important than most audiences and most preachers realize.

Q. What do you think about the gadgets used today like video projectors, etc.

Bill. I like most of them. I use the video projector along with slides to help communicate sermon points. If we had the equipment, I'd probably use more "gadgets." I just see most of these things as elements of the age in which we live. I suppose anything can be overdone, but most of these are tools that can be used in positive ways. We do try to change up things from time to time, and on occasion, I dispense with the video projector altogether. Sometimes we project words of songs and sometimes we don't.

Q. What do you think most of your church members need to know that they may not?

Bill. Wow, that's loaded! Maybe one of the most important goes back to a very important doctrine not addressed all that often. It's the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Every Christian ought to know how they can best serve the Lord, and they ought to be involved in some viable ministry as part of their congregation, and as an individual believer. Too often, the church seems to want to leave things to the "staff," when it may not always be possible for the staff to do everything.

Q. What do you think outsiders need to know about Southside?

Bill. I guess I would begin by emphasizing a couple of the things that churches of Christ have been best known for in the past. The first is our view of the simplicity of worship. Sometimes the worship experience is bogged down with so much formality, tradition, and ritual that the essential act of worship is impaired. Simplicity in worship encourages participation from everyone and helps to counter one of today's problems with congregations becoming audiences instead of participants. Another thing I would like outsiders to know about Southside is that we encourage serious personal discipleship. In some churches, people have come to think that attendance (at least occasionally), a contribution, and a listing on the membership roll is all it takes. At Southside, we encourage something far different. You'll hear preaching and teaching that promotes personal involvement, personal application of God's word, and responsibility for cooperating with what God is trying to do in human lives. Those are huge things that can make great differences.

Q. What's the most important message you'd like to communicate to our readers?

Bill. That God loves you more than you can imagine. That Jesus died as a sacrifice for your sins. That putting your faith in Jesus isn't just a ritual or a tradition to follow, it is a life to live. The church is simply God's people, a family. Our goal is to follow Jesus. Period. No frills, no fluff, but what a great thing that is.

End

On the CrossTies web site <http://www.crossties.org>, one can find an archive of hundreds of Bill's articles, along with sermon outlines, and Bible studies. Bill's weekly article is even available in an audio (MP3) format that can be downloaded and used on computers and personal audio devices.

One important aspect of CrossTies Ministry often overlooked is that the resources can be easily used to encourage and help others deepen their understanding of Scripture, or deal with some problem. Tapes of sermons, specially recorded tapes that help Christians invite others to attend church services, along with informational brochures and pamphlets all work together as resources anyone can use.

Additional resources are in the planning and development stages. This includes additional audio resources available on both cassettes and CDs, audio programs available on the Internet and local radio stations, and printed newsletters.

Members of Southside have all these resources available free! They are terrific personal evangelism tools, or something that can help anyone grow and develop spiritually. Some of these resources can be found on the CrossTies Ministry display table located at the front door of the older building that leads to the auditorium. Materials on that display table are free.

Southside's "CARE Building" Provides A Versatile Community Resource



When discussions were happening about plans to construct a multi-purpose building that would serve a growing congregation with offices, classrooms, and fellowship space, one of the other considerations was the importance of using the facility to serve the Grenada community at large. Members did not want to commit a large sum of money to a building that would sit empty and unused most of the time. Instead, most everyone wanted others around us to use the building for a variety of activities.

That dream has become reality. Today, community groups, civic clubs, family reunions, weddings and receptions, Narcotics Anonymous groups, and others insure that something is happening at least a couple of nights per week, and some weeks, there are activities every day. Southside's CARE Building has become both well-known and a favored spot for holding all sorts of events.

With such popular use, it's always advisable to schedule activities well in advance. Some activities have a permanent spot on the calendar, some are planned months ahead, so if you have an activity that you would like to hold at the CARE Building, be sure to call the church office as far ahead as possible. We do not "charge" for use of the building, but we do have to pay for utilities and upkeep, so donations are very much appreciated!

Of course, the CARE Building is also the facility enjoyed by our young people, our Life Groups, Bible classes, and you'll also find the church office there. Call Peggy at 662- 226-5030 for information, or to schedule an upcoming event.

Drop In For A Chat Or Cup Of Coffee!

No appointment is necessary, unless you know ahead of time that a counseling session or Bible study is required. Normal office hours are Monday - Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Just drop in if you have a question, just want to talk, or if you'd like to find out more about Southside, one of our ministries, or how to get involved.. We'll do everything possible to see that you receive the help you need.

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Times of Services

Sunday

Morning Assembly 10:00 AM
Life Groups Meet

In Homes On Sunday Nights

"5th Sunday" Nights
All Life Groups meet at
the Care Building

Wednesday

Bible Classes 6:30 PM

Everyone is invited to attend
any and all assemblies, classes,
or Life Groups