



State of
the
Church
Address

July 27

2008

Pastor Adrian S. Taylor's annual State of the Church Address for the year
between July 2007 to July 2008

The Measure
of Discipleship

Thank God for showing his love by bringing us to another anniversary. It is appropriate to pause and recognize all ministers, deacons, deaconesses, mothers, and trustees who are present. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of our executive leaders; Diaconate Chairman - Curtis Phillips, Trustee Chairman - Albert White, Finance Chairman - Carl Baskin, and Clerk - Veita Carter. I would also thank all denominational leaders, civic leaders, and elected officials from all levels and branches of government present today.

The year 1886 was filled with historic moments. During that year x-ray technology was developed. France gifted the Statue of Liberty to America. The Industrial Revolution was in full swing. Scientist John Pemberton invented Coca-Cola. President Grover Cleveland sat in the highest elected office in America. In addition, telegraph was still a viable communication method. More than one hundred twenty-two years later, we find ourselves in an equally historic period. Robots now assist in some surgical procedures. Lady Liberty stands triumphant, though many are still struggling to enjoy the freedom she represents. Pepsi is now the taste of a new generation. The world economy is in the throes of recession. The internet now enables us to instantly dialogue with our peers in other hemispheres. Moreover, America is preparing for a presidential election while political tensions are palpable. This is truly a pivotal point in history.

From July 2007 to today, Springhill has grown substantively. Numerically, we remain strong with a steady increase of partners. Thankfully, we are financially solvent, despite economic turmoil. Our partners have remained faithful in regular, proportionate giving and through special efforts. More importantly, the commitment of our partners has increased, quantified by many new faces taking an active role in the development of this great ministry. It is extremely exciting to see people from various backgrounds and age groups passionately working toward a common mission. This shared mission pulls us closer together while focusing our efforts, and productively channeling the swelling energies and talents of a diverse congregation. I classify this as substantive growth, because fully assimilating newcomers is critical for true progress to occur, and we have accomplished that objective. As more people join in with us we will be tested to find new areas where they too can exercise their God-given gifts.

Springhill Missionary Baptist Church is a unique blending of personalities, which stands triumphantly strong one hundred twenty-two years after inception. We are confident in knowing, He that has begun a good work in us is performing it unto the day of Jesus Christ.¹ Our mission is still “to produce mature believers who are fully committed to Exalting the Savior, Elevating Society, and Edifying the Saints, while maintaining high standards of creativity, excitement, and excellence in all areas of ministry.” Therefore, as Pastor and President, it gives me great joy to report the state of the church is stronger than ever before. In addition, we are considered one of the leading churches in Gainesville, Florida. Praise God for his grace.

Report

Administration Department

The Administration department continues to establish new benchmarks of excellence. We are proudly able to proclaim that operationally Springhill is more efficient, and structurally solid. This department made up of the Assimilation, Communications, Diaconate Council, Deaconesses, Finance, and Trustees has done a sensational job carrying out its specific functions.

Over the years, we have been blessed by the service of Deacons Levi Griffin, and Rufus Moss. Both of whom are now well into their eighties. Their service to this church through the years deserves greater recognition. Let us pause now to applaud them. I am recommending them to be honored with the title Deacon Emeritus, which will make them Deacons of this church from now until Christ reappears in the clouds.

Looking to the future, we will have several items on the agenda for our coming strategic planning session in October. Any organization that is growing as fast as we are needs to examine processes. Therefore, I am recommending we form a special project group established to work with all departments and ministries to streamline our processes. Moreover, they will provide visual flowcharts to help everyone understand how our church operates in the twenty-first century model. Furthermore, we will begin looking at a comprehensive investment strategy to prepare for the long-term financial health of our fellowship and to reach our goal of being a positive net worth ministry by 2015.

Upreach Department

Exalting the Savior is the first part of our corporate mission statement. This is more than something we give lip service to; it has become a part of the fiber of our fellowship. Through our Audio-Visual Team, Choirs, Fine Arts Team, Musicians, Prayer Band and Ushers we are actively carrying out Christ's appeal to lift him up to the pinnacle of men's sights. Upreach ministries have committed to continually refining of worship to give God our best in all we do.

The next opportunity for Springhill's Upreach department is to elevate worship to a new level of excellence. Promoting authentic worship that pushes us beyond the norms of a humdrum, regimen, to a fluid and heavenly experience is paramount. Continual training accomplished by sponsoring in-house workshops, and sending delegates to other training sessions throughout the country will help expose us to new possibilities in achieving excellence in worship. Consequently, this will position our Upreach department toward the 2009 goal of hosting a live recording concert of the Springhill Mass Choir. Furthermore, training will further we in our quest to produce a quality television broadcast by the end of this year.

Inreach Department

Edifying the saints is the second component of Springhill's corporate mission. The camaraderie intended to be embodied in a local fellowship is aggressively advocated in the New Testament. Paul compels the believers in Rome in these words; "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."ⁱⁱ Our fellowship is blessed to have several ministries carrying out this charge while ministering to specific segments of our church's population. The Men's Ministry, Sunday School, Women's Ministry, Young Matrons, Youth Ministry, Young Adult Ministry, and Young at Heart Ministry all meet the need for edifying the saints, specific to their interest groups.

Springhill has successfully met the challenge of providing ministries for the four generations. Additionally, we have established avenues for these groups to interact on a substantive level while understanding each other's varied perspectives.

The next area of growth for this department will be to establish a systematic spiritual development plan for our partners. We have to find a way to move intentionally partners from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity, then from maturity to ministry. Whereas, loosely structured teaching programs have left a developmental void, a comprehensive Christian Education program is critical. Moreover, we must find ways to provide our partners with life skill tools they can employ to live out the faith we sing and pray of daily. Pastor and bestselling author, Rick Warren has developed a wonderful system of spiritual development at his Saddleback Church, in Lake Forest, California. Springhill's Inreach Department must implement a similar model for providing opportunities to our fellowship for spiritually rigorous training that will move us from talking about living for God to actually understanding the dynamics of doing so.

Outreach Department

Elevating society is the third prong to this church's mission outlined by Christ. Through our Community Action Council, Education Council, Health and Wellness, and the newly reorganized Home Missions ministries; we are continually raising our community and fellowship to new levels.

Christ obligated himself to empowering, equipping, and growing those churches that carry out his mandate. Moving forward, special emphasis will be given to coordinating evangelism training, thus giving needed information for Christian witnessing locally, regionally, and globally to all who need to hear the gospel. Additionally, we must create a comprehensive plan for outreach in the local community, and move toward assisting foreign mission efforts in other continents and countries. Our fellowship will grow stronger by forcing ourselves to think beyond the four walls of this building and begin exploring new initiatives that will help society on a larger scale. We cannot stop until we have a lasting local imprint that extends into a ministry with a global impact.

Pastoral Initiatives

As Servant-Leader of this fellowship, I am exploring the rudiments of our faith and challenging myself to be more innovative and fresh in my approach to all areas of service. I remain fully committed to exploring methods for growing new leaders, and establishing a stronger fellowship. During this year, I taught Sunday School for eighteen weeks to produce new leaders. Additionally, this year I implemented a joint meeting for all departments known as Springhill Advanced Leaders Training or S.A.L.T. meetings. The goal of these sessions is to increase interdepartmental communication, and encourage collaboration between ministries while providing recurrent leadership development training. I have also coordinated visits with a delegation of future leaders to other churches, which could help us expand our ministry outlook.

God has challenged me to emphasize spiritual growth on a personal level within our church. “Going Deeper” is our theme for this year, and we started by studying a series of lessons on the subject. Venturing toward the threshold of Glory in worship is often spiritually lifting; however, my deep commitment is to further the maturity of individuals and broaden our base of mature partners. Strengthened by the power of him whom is the fullness of the Godhead bodily I have preached more than 200 sermons in the past year, attended or facilitated more than 250 meetings, baptized almost 100 candidates, and developed new leaders.

Vision

Our denominational work has expanded despite a changing religious atmosphere. Baptists along with all other mainline groups are being forced to the margins by a whirlwind surge of non-denominationalism and secularism. For the first time in its history, the Southern Baptist Convention (to which we are not affiliated) has reported a decline in membership despite a growing U.S. and world population. Our own National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Incorporated has seen dwindling numbers in annual meetings during the past five years. Adding to the cacophony of religious upheaval are the increased infringements upon religious rights by certain groups; religious zealots pushing political agendas in the name of God; and false prophets spewing meaningless rhetoric, while shaming the cause of Christ. This is a critical moment in the history of our faith that must be addressed meaningfully.

Unfortunately, despite such peril, nostalgia has taken an idolatrous position in the hearts of many. Some would rather spend excessive time reminiscing on yesterday's traditions, while missing today's opportunities, and refusing to prepare for tomorrow's challenges. If mainline Christian faiths are to survive, there must be a conscious effort to begin addressing the moral imperatives of our modern context with vigor.

Springhill has continued to remain at the forefront of the efforts to help our denomination and fellow brothers and sisters move forward. As time marches on, the need to accomplish our five pillars of vision becomes more urgent. We are now almost half way to our goal of increasing the partnership to two thousand by 2010. Using every resource available including personal networking sites like MySpace, and Face book; increasing our television commercial frequency; using more print advertisement in periodicals, exploring the option of Streamingfaith.com; increasing our use of Youtube.com; and using podcast technology will all help us reach the prescribed goal. As new partners are brought into the fellowship, it is necessary that we create a clear system of progression. While technology is helpful, nothing replaces face-to-face interactions. Looking forward there must be a conscious effort to establish community bible study sessions where the un-churched can become exposed to Christ's message away from a physical church building. Our partners have to begin thinking of creative ways to promote redemption's message while engaging in more edifying interactions, rather than superficial pleasantries and empty diatribes.

The vision objectives that speak to education and economic empowerment are a present challenge. The moral imperative to promote educational excellence and economic empowerment is eminent during this period of financial uncertainty. Partners of this fellowship are being encouraged to excel through post-secondary and graduate education. Since last year, five of our partners have obtained bachelors or masters degrees, and three have graduated from high school. In the coming year we will develop a Saturday school initiative, extended into a summer development camp. Proudly, I can also report we will soon have regular employability training courses, recurring homeownership seminars, and financial literacy workshops. Adding to this list of economic empowerment initiatives will be our own Springhill Christian Gift Shop. This will

make us the first church in this part of Gainesville to have such an undertaking. We are moving beyond talking and are accomplishing the things we set out to do.

As we continue looking toward broader initiatives, I also think it important to engage the conversation of our church's environmental policy or lack thereof. Historically, the issue of environmental conservation has been reserved for upper middle class Caucasians, and excluded lower income minorities. Although this is the norm, the time has come for everyone to address the environmental challenges facing our world. Increasing energy costs, pollution related illnesses, including asthma and some cancers, and global ecological disasters are compelling us to seek new ways to reduce waste and consumption. Springhill will begin using green products and supporting environmentally friendly businesses. Furthermore, we should find ways to recycle the things we use. Lastly there is a great opportunity to utilize renewable energy and water sources, which we should actively explore implementing. All this might sound like idealistic bantering; however, record gas prices, ever-increasing energy bills, and children becoming ill because of exposure to toxins, is more than ideology. It is our present reality. Although environmental consciousness sounds like an existential conversation in our community, we must grow to seeing ourselves as part of a larger society. We are all individual threads woven into a tapestry of humanity spanning the globe.

Recapitulating, I am recommending the following:

1. Honor Deacon Levi Griffin, and Deacon Rufus Moss (both are 80 plus years old) with the title Deacon Emeritus and include their names in our churches history from now until the coming our Savior with this title.
2. Organize a special process development team that will design process flows for the critical areas of our ministry.
3. Create a Recurrent Leadership Training and Development Task Force and Christian Education program.
4. Establish a Environmental Sustainability Project Group to identify a process for finding ways our church can reduce waste, recycle what we use, and utilize renewable energy and water sources.

More than one hundred and twenty-two years after beginning Springhill still stands. Through tragedy and triumph, she still stands. Despite steps back and steps forward, she still stands. Overcoming hurts, and enjoying happiness, this great church still stands. The blessed news from Heaven is that she will continue to stand for one hundred twenty two years more. As your leader, I challenge you to stand bold in the Lord. Stand triumphant! Stand encouraged! Stand determined! Stand resolute, and unwavering! Stand until the chief corner stone that Peter testified of, returns on the cloud.ⁱⁱⁱ

*Standing on the promises of Christ my King,
Through eternal ages let His praises ring,
Glory in the highest; I will shout and sing,
Standing on the promises of God.*

John 13:31-37

13:31

Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

13:32

If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

13:33

Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews *, Whither I go, ye cannot * come; so now I say to you.

13:34

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

13:35

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another *.

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- I. Commandment
 - a. Contemporary - “a new commandment”
 - b. Christ Given - “I give unto you...”

- II. Conclusion
 - a. Universally accepted - “by this all men...”
 - b. Unmistakable - “shall know...”

- III. Communion
 - a. Personal Dedication - “because you...”
 - b. Practical Application - “love the brethren.”

ⁱ Philippians 1:6

ⁱⁱ Romans 14:19

ⁱⁱⁱ Acts 4:11