

Knowing Pastor Bill Mason, 1970-2020

In the fall of 1970, I arrived as a sophomore at Oral Roberts University (ORU) after spending the previous five years in Muskogee, including one year of junior college. President Roberts' new relationship with the United Methodist Church created a natural conduit for other Methodist students to find our way to Tulsa for both our education and our spiritual nourishment. Tulsa United Methodist Churches at the time were healthy, growing, and filled with spiritual opportunities as well as open doors for part-time youth director positions. By my senior year at ORU, I had joined a cadre of Methodist boys who worked with area youth groups. Together we teamed up from time to time to create retreats, seminars, and workshops, and we shared youth group experiences that helped build life-time bonds of friendship. Young men like Adrian Cole, Dub Ambrose, David Burris, Tom Albin, and Tom Harrison worked to help build the spiritual lives of hundreds of young people in those early years. And one young Methodist boy from Magnolia, Arkansas, Billy Joe Daugherty, helped fill one of those positions.

The year after my ORU enrollment, my family followed me to Tulsa as my father received an appointment to pastor, Will Rogers United Methodist Church, which is how I became one of those youth directors, working with the students of the Will Rogers Church. During my senior year, an eighteen-year old from Rose Hill United Methodist Church stepped onto the ORU campus as a freshman and into the role as youth director of Epworth United Methodist Church in West Tulsa. By the end of that year, we had become colleagues in youth ministry and began a life-long friendship.

The overlap of student ministry allowed me to learn from other friends and to see the different ways in which Tulsa Methodist congregations functioned and thrived. The growing list of strong evangelical United Methodist preachers in Tulsa was followed by the growth of those churches as well. Instead of finding mild, vanilla mainline United Methodist preachers, Tulsa abounded with powerful preaching, evangelistic emphasis, and growing Methodist congregations. Rarely did a week pass that I did not hear of the outpouring of God's Spirit influencing a Tulsa congregation. Three younger rising Evangelical Methodist preachers were making their mark on the Tulsa spiritual community. Ray Owen was a long-time friend of my parents who helped to build New Haven United Methodist Church; David Thomas was taking the small Aldersgate congregation to new heights, and Bill Mason had begun moving Asbury United Methodist Church into position to become one of Oklahoma Methodism's strongest congregations.

At that same time, Pastor Mason began putting in place a strong staff, including one young University of Tulsa college student, Bill Clark, who joined our Tulsa team of youth directors. From time to time I would find myself at Asbury for a camp planning meeting or a conversation with Bill Clark and other youth directors. I kept hearing about the growth of Asbury and the powerful influence

of Bill Mason. At home, over dinner, my parents talked with appreciation of Bill's influence in opening fresh avenues of ministry for my dad's ministry.

My father found that his long-standing tools could not stop the decline of attendance and membership at his city church; it was the first time he had been appointed to a city church in seven years. The Will Rogers area of Tulsa had begun to experience movement to the South. School busing forced families to move further south to the Memorial and Edison school districts, and the small Union district began to benefit from the southward move. As a result, my dad found it increasingly difficult to draw people back to the mid-town area for worship. Bill Mason's willingness to look outside the Methodist denomination's tools for support encouraged my dad to begin looking to Pastor Mason for ideas such as Evangelism Explosion, Stephen's Ministry, and Bethel Bible Study. The impact of these tools changed the trajectory of Dad's ministry and helped him turn the Will Rogers congregation into a growing church once again.

From this time onward, I saw Bill Mason as one of the pastors that I wanted to learn from and emulate in the days ahead. From time to time, I had the privilege of being with Pastor Mason, whether attending a district gathering, hearing him speak boldly about his concerns for the church, or being present in meetings with my dad. Those days before seminary, rubbing shoulders with Oklahoma's strongest evangelical leaders, had as much if not more impact on my future ministry than did any of the classes I took in my seminary education.

Growing up in the United Methodist Church, I rarely witnessed passionate evangelistic ministry, nor did I witness a seriousness about prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit. Most Methodist laity seemed somewhat pious on Sundays, but come Monday morning, the passion had died. I wanted to be part of ministry that took Jesus seriously 24/7. While my parents were serious about their faith, I rarely saw that same fire in the congregations Dad served, that is until I came to Tulsa in the 1970s. During that time, I witnessed pastoral leaders who were serious about bringing people to Christ. Dr. Bill Mason and Dr. L. D. Thomas set a standard for me that gave me confidence that moving into United Methodist ministry might open doors for me to be part of a serious disciple-making ministry after all.

In the spring of 1974, I began a serious search for seminary education. At the time, Asbury Seminary was not highly recommended for United Methodist seminary students. As an independent school with a bit of a checkered past, most United Methodist leaders discouraged me from attending Asbury. However, two key voices encouraged me to look towards Asbury; one was John Collier, the University of Tulsa Wesley Foundation Director and the other, Pastor Bill Mason. Those voices gave me one of the greatest gifts I have ever received — an education from Asbury Theological Seminary and the confidence that I could be a faithful classically orthodox Christian leader and find meaningful ministry in the United Methodist Church.

In the spring of 1978, I was completing my senior year at Asbury Theological Seminary, preparing to launch my ministerial career, and getting married to boot. We wanted to marry while friends were still in the area, so we scheduled our ceremony the same weekend as graduation. Feeling extremely anxious about pastoral ministry and marriage, I worried about my ability to take a church on my own. I called churches looking for positions as an associate or an assistant, but nothing came available. In March of that year, I called our Tulsa District Superintendent to say that I needed a job. Soon we were sent to Ada, Oklahoma, to serve a two-point charge, Ada Asbury and Ada Francis congregations.

With the Lord's help, those two churches began to thrive and by the spring of 1980, we were actually seeing growth in membership and attendance. One evening the phone rang at the parsonage, and I was thrilled and humbled to hear Pastor Mason's voice on the line. Introducing himself to me, he quickly got to his point. "Guy, I would like for you to come to Asbury to work with our student ministry."

I was quite flattered to say the least to think that Bill Mason wanted me to work with him. However, it did not take me long to answer. Having been burned out in student ministry to the point that I relented to God's call to enter pastoral ministry, I could not see myself going back into the work with students, plus our small churches were beginning to grow for the first time in years. I believed that I still had much work to do in Ada. I thanked Bill for his generous consideration of me and he, always the gracious gentleman, politely received my decline. Some years later I discovered that Bill had turned to a couple of ORU seminary students, one of those, Dick Read, to build his student ministry team. God works in amazing ways as Dick Read is still in ministry with Asbury United Methodist Church.

My next significant interaction with Pastor Mason came in the early to mid-80's as I received an appointment to pastor the booming Oklahoma City suburb, Mustang, Oklahoma. Mustang, a bedroom community, was the fastest growing town in Oklahoma at the time. People worked in Oklahoma City and came home to get away from the hustle and to place their children in one of the best Oklahoma City school systems at the time. I needed help in organizing and staffing for this small congregation. I knew one pastor who had done what I wanted to do, so I drove up Interstate 44 to meet with Bill Mason. I wanted to learn from him some of the tools he had used to grow Asbury. I loved being at the master's feet as Bill shared story after story, offered resources and advice, much of which I put to use in the next several years. In hindsight, I only wished I had taken more of his advice and stayed longer in that setting before taking the opportunity to move.

For years, our Conference failed to recognize the leadership gifts of Bill Mason, in large part because he stood for traditional/evangelical convictions,

while the majority of his pastoral peers tended to be more liberal. Bill received significant criticism because of his strong work with Good News and the Mission Society. The result of this was that time after time Bill was not elected to represent our Conference as a delegate to General Conference. What other liberal pastors had not noticed however, was the impact of the ministry of those few but powerful evangelical pastoral leaders in Oklahoma. Bill Mason, L.D. Thomas, David Thomas, Guy Ames, Jr., Ray Owen, and others opened the door for a new wave of younger evangelical leaders. Soon, the numbers of young evangelical pastors grew to such a degree that we have been able to dominate our Oklahoma Conference leadership and large churches for nearly 30 years. Without the sacrifices of Bill Mason and a few others, the ministry of Tom Harrison, Wade Paschal, Guy Ames, and dozens of others would never have been possible.

And now, after 44 plus years of United Methodist ministry, I have the joy of completing my ministry at Tulsa Asbury United Methodist Church. I see that my life and career have come full circle. A handful of Christian leaders have been used by God to mentor me and encourage me in both my spiritual life and my ministry. One of my greatest delights has been to finish out my years once again in the circle of Bill Mason, Pastor Emeritus, Asbury United Methodist Church. When I think of those upon whose shoulders God has allowed me to stand, one name always rises to the top – Pastor Bill Mason. I am eternally grateful for God's hand in his life and the generosity of his life in serving Christ.

From Peggie (Peggie Mason Nash)

Bill Mason didn't meet me until I was seven years old. He fell in love with my mother and he got a package deal. His instant family was my mom, myself, and my little sister, Robin. He had waited to marry until he was in his 30's and had lived a popular bachelor's lifestyle until that time. I can only imagine his life changes by adding a wife and two girls in a small house. Things remained that way until eight years later when he balanced out the hormones with Cameron and Randy. When he was called into the ministry, we were excited to move to Dallas so he could go to seminary at SMU. Six people were living in an even smaller house and one bathroom. When he graduated from seminary, we had no idea where we were going to live in Oklahoma. We really got lucky moving to Tulsa. People had been telling us that we will probably move every two years from then on.

Asbury was meeting in Key Elementary school and the congregation was small. Very quickly the membership grew to hundreds attending. I always felt the love from the wonderful people there. I also knew there were that many eyes on me. I felt like I had to be perfect being a PK (preacher's kid). I remember when I was 16 years old, and had just my driver's license; I got permission to drive over to a friend's house. As I was going home, I hit a wet spot in the street where algae had grown. I fishtailed and lost control of the station wagon, jumped the curb, thought I was hitting the brakes but pushed the accelerator so hard it locked, hit the brake pedal, and broke. I went through people's yards, turned, and went back across the street and hit a house. The house I hit belonged to an Asbury member. She was so sweet to me. She said, "Let's go in the house and call your dad." I kept saying, "He's going to KILL me." She assured me that was not going to happen. I felt terrible and knew I was going to be in trouble. When he answered the phone, his response was very calm and he wanted to make sure I was okay. That made a huge impression on me that he must love me a lot to only be concerned about my safety at that moment.

I was always known as "Bill Mason's daughter." I guess people knew my first name, but I have always been proud to be his daughter (the one who looked just like Jayne Mason).

As the years go by and he grows older, I get to repay him for raising me in a wonderful Christian family. The roles are reversing, but it is my privilege to take his hand now.

I used to worry about him falling asleep in church, but now I feel he gets a pass for all the years he has loved Asbury. I've always said, "He gets his best sleep in church!"
Love, Peggie

From Robin (Robin Mason Tanner)

Bill Mason came into my life when I was one year old. I was living with my mother Jayne and my older sister Peggie. After their courtship, Bill and my mom were married. I was the ring bearer. Bill became my dad that day. I could have never known the father he would become. After a few years, Dad wanted to formally adopt Peggie and me as his own children. Our biological father did not want him to do that and said, "My daughters are all I have left." So, Dad gave in to his wishes.

Many years passed. Peggie had been married for several years. I had been married for about a year and our biological father died suddenly. Dad waited a

respectful amount of time and again told our mother, Jayne, that he would like to go formally adopt Peggie and me. After a time, the process was done, and Peggie and I were officially his daughters. The judge at the time said it was the first time an individual had adopted adult children so many years after the marriage. At the time and now looking back on it, Dad's decision to adopt Peggie and me was made out of true love for both of us and our mother. I think he also wanted to be legally responsible for us. Peggie and I knew when we were young that this new man in our lives was much more than that. Today, after benefiting from his love and guidance for more than 60 years, Peggie and I know that we were blessed when he came into our lives. Our mother Jayne was also blessed to be chosen and loved by a man who was willing to take on an instant family and the responsibility that it required. Dad is also an amazing grandfather. When our sons were younger, they both played a lot of sports. Mom and dad were avid fans of whatever they were doing. Always at the games, when it was too hot or too cold, rain or shine, cheering on their grandsons. Dad was also never bashful about complaining to the umpire about a call that he thought had been missed. But it was always a respectful complaint. My mother's life, my sister's life, my husband's life and our sons' lives have all been greatly influenced and enriched from having Bill Mason as the patriarch of our family. We have all truly, been blessed. Dad, I love you, Robin

From Cameron (William Cameron Mason II)

First of all, I would like to thank Judy so much for taking all this time with my dad to put this book together. It's has been very enjoyable hearing all the great memories from Dad and family friends.

My dad's consistency over my lifetime has been amazing. His faith is second to none. The time he spends in the Bible and in prayer for people is mind boggling. He has notebooks that he writes all prayer requests in. He prays daily for every request and never stops until there is a resolution. Over his lifetime, he has filled several of those notebooks. His patience and peacefulness are comforting to me. His role as a father has never wavered. He shows support for us in every situation. As some know, Dad always eats Saturday lunch at Coney Islander, and it is something I look forward to every time we come to visit.

Growing up, Dad dedicated so much of his time to the church. I remember Dad was often already gone from the house in the early mornings to visit and pray with people in the hospital before surgery. He missed family evening dinners as well. He is a great people person. Dad's busiest day of work was obviously Sunday. He loved his work at Asbury and only took a couple of weeks off a year. He always made our family vacations very special. Looking back, I had a fantastic childhood.

I deeply believe I'm living under a blessing from God for all the good works of my Dad. I think scripture backs this up.

Proverbs 20:7

⁷A righteous man who walks in his integrity— How blessed are his sons after him.
NASB

Psalms 112: 1-3

¹Praise the Lord! How blessed is the man who fears the Lord. Who greatly delights in His commandments. ²His descendants will be mighty on earth; the

generation of the upright will be blessed. ³Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. NASB

Psalms 1:1-3

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of the sinners, nor, sit in the seat of scoffers! ²But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And in His law, he meditates day and night. ³And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither: and in whatever he does, he prospers. NASB

My wife and I, as well as my descendants, are blessed to have my dad in our lives. The example of his life has been a great outline for me.

I can't express how much I love my daddy. Cam

From Adriane (Adriane Mason, Cameron's wife)

Bill married Cam and me on March 22, 1997. How many girls are lucky enough to have their father-in-law marry them? Cam and I went with Bill and Jayne twice to Branson, Missouri for vacation trips. In August, 2015, Cam and I went to Lucerne, Switzerland with Bill. That is one of Bill's favorite places to visit and I am so grateful for the time with Bill and our trips together. I'm grateful for him sharing his trips with us and the special time together. He always brought peace and joy to me and fun memories together on the trips. Love, Adriane

From Randy (William Randolph Mason)

I am the youngest child in the Mason family. Tulsa and Asbury Methodist Church are the places where I grew up. Even though Dad was busy as the pastor of a large church, he still made time for his family. I learned kindness and compassion from him. He is not an outdoor person nor an athlete, but he and I joined Indian Guides where we fished and camped. It was fun, but we both agreed fishing and camping were not going to be our hobbies.

I think Dad was trying to teach us about the birds and the bees by having little animals. We started out with rabbits, cats, and dogs, then we had two ugly geese that honked loudly. I think the neighbors asked us to get rid of them.

I had always wanted a horse. Bill Claxton sold us a horse that he had purchased at an auction. He brought the horse to our house thinking we had a place arranged to keep it. The horse stayed in our backyard on 56th street until we could locate a stable. Again, the neighbors weren't too thrilled with that.

As I entered junior high and high school, I found I was good at gymnastics. I began at the YMCA, and then I became a part of the Coca-Cola gymnastics team. Dad was not able to attend my practices or meets, but Mom stepped up for that duty.

My parents always tried to make our growing-up experiences fun and well-rounded. It was probably quite trying at times since I was growing up with long hair and loud music. Mom and Dad never gave up on me, and I always knew how much they loved me.

As I grew older, I tried to show my love for Mom and Dad, and I try now to show my love to my dad. I live in Oklahoma City now, but I try to come visit at least once a month. We regularly talk on the telephone.

I love my dad so much and pray each day for his wonderful life to continue and to be blessed each and every day.

I am proud to be his son. All my love, Dad, Randy

God's Chosen Path

It was at the time of my life when I was working at my family's office supply company and before I met and married Jayne that God's chosen path for my life started to take shape. I didn't know it at the time, but while I was attending a Billy Graham crusade in Oklahoma City, I began to become aware of a change as God was making known His path for my life.

As I look back, that time at the crusade has come to mean more and more to me. There were other times that God was leading me, but the crusade is the point where I was becoming conscious of His path for my life. It was clearly God's plan for me to be at the crusade that night and hear Billy Graham's sermon from Matthew 7:13-14 about the wide and narrow gate.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. NIV

As I have written earlier, Mom and my friends had gone home after the crusade. I went to bed and my life passed before my mind's eye, and I saw all the events of my life were a part of the wide road. For the first time in my late twenties, I did not want to spend eternity in hell. I prayed asking for forgiveness and asked Jesus to come into my life. I went right to sleep, and the next day I felt on top of the world. By the third day, all of the alcohol had left my body. I felt strong and changed.

The next four years were vastly important. I began to experience the love of Jesus, and He changed my heart and my life. I continued to work hard to be successful in my job, but in my free time, I spent time growing as a new Christian by attending Bible studies and other opportunities that God put in my path.

In 1958 at 31 years old, I met and married Jayne and became a father all on the same day. I also began to assume more responsibilities at our church, and I was asked to serve as the Lay Delegate for Nichols Hills Methodist Church. I was more than aware of God's path for me, but as I dealt privately with it for me, I encountered five serious roadblocks (God didn't, but I did).

At this point in my Christian development, only prayed asking God's guidance and direction for my life when I became aware of a problem. I don't know why I wasn't praying about all matters at that time, but these are the facts.

After the birth of our fourth child, Randy, I told Jayne that God was calling me into full-time Christian ministry. For several months, I had been dealing with all of the roadblocks before mentioning God's call on my life. It never entered my mind that it was logical to pray about God's path for me regarding the five roadblocks to full-time Christian ministry.

Eventually, I looked to God to walk me through each roadblock until I was convinced that each one was not a valid objection. For example, after having our fourth child, I became concerned that I would not be able to send four children through college on a minister's income. God quickly reminded me that my maternal grandfather sent all six of his children through college or as far as they wanted to go on his preacher's income that was sometimes a chicken. By the time God patiently saw me through this issue, I was at peace and no longer saw the children's educations as a reason to not enter full-time Christian service.

It was not long until the second issue arose in my mind, but the issue of the Mike Bryan Office Supply business seemed like a huge roadblock for me. Who would succeed my uncle and mother in the business when they retired? The plan was for me to take over the

management of the business at some point. Would it be honorable of me to leave? Plus, I truly enjoyed my job. After struggling with that objection as to why I could not go into full-time ministry, I finally prayed asking God's direction. In a day or two, I called my uncle to talk with him, and he swiftly and easily said that he and my Aunt Gladys would do all they could to support me. I remember to this day the joy I felt in my heart at that moment.

I won't rehash all five of the roadblocks because I no longer remember them, but what I want to point out is trusting God and following His chosen path for me has been the right way. When I am obedient to God, He opens doors that I have been unable to open to this very day. When I look back and think about how God has opened doors for me, I am always reminded of the time we couldn't find a house to live in that we could afford when we had made the decision to leave business and go to seminary in Dallas. Jayne and I had not been able to find a house for us in days and days, but when I prayed, the Lord Jesus had exactly what we needed that we could afford. We lived in that house for three years and loved it.

As I look back over my life, experiences and memories flood my mind and heart that show me the wisdom of asking God first. As Senior Pastor of Asbury Church, during my prayer time every morning, I always sought God's guidance in all I did or even thought about doing.

The Holy Spirit was with me each and every day helping me to know, to trust, and to obey.

The longer I live, I learn to trust and obey the Lord Jesus more and more as He teaches me of His trustworthiness.

At 93 years of age, I am thankful that He chose His path for my life and for all of the joy that has meant and still means to this day.

How I regret the stumbling and falling when He was urging and leading me saying, "Bill, I am the way."

I am grateful He never gave up on me.

He is the way, the truth, and the life.

I love you with the love of the Lord, Bill Mason