

Bill Duncan sees his call clearly: 'Go in and help churches'

WEST POINT, Miss. (BP) – At age 83, Bill Duncan is still the man Mississippi churches are apt to call as an interim when they aren't quite ready to call a full time pastor. "I do believe my call was to go in and help churches," Duncan said from his home in Starkville where he lives with his bride of 61 years, Marion. "I love to help churches. I love to help people find God's calling in their life."

Duncan guides churches through rough patches, sometimes helping them redraft bylaws, update pay schedules, restructure staff, and modernize pastoral search procedures.

Now in his third year as interim pastor at Siloam Church, West Point, the retired fulltime pastor, director of missions, and church planter has provided pulpit supply and held eight interim posts with little interruption since 2002. He paused at age 75 for open heart surgery, but credits God for good health and a "tremendous desire to keep serving."

He has also taught classes for 25 years at the New Orleans Seminary Extension center in Starkville. That's where he met Brian Hood, a former pastor and soon-to-be church planter Duncan considers his spiritual son. To Hood, who will be planting a church in Hernando, Duncan has been a father figure.



The Hood Family

“Dr. Duncan has been definitely a friend, but Dr. Duncan has been a father to me because my father [Melvin] passed away... six years ago,” Hood said, “and so Dr. Duncan has been that one that has just filled that void. He’s a friend and a brother in Christ, but it goes so much deeper than that, as far as the advice that he has shared with me over the years, his wisdom, and knowledge.”

Duncan has encountered churches that experienced friction over the smallest of difficulties. One church asked a pastor to leave because he moved a cherished picture to another spot on the wall. At another congregation, Duncan said, the deacons confronted the pastor and told him he needed to shave his beard because it presented a rugged appearance they found inappropriate. In that case, the pastor stayed and a deacon left.

Duncan considers his greatest achievement in interim leadership to be his first stint at East End Church, Columbus, where he served from 2004-2005 and from 2015-2016.

“When I went in as their interim pastor, the church had split and some of them had gone out to build another church.” Those were the 30 or 40 members who followed the pastor to build a new church, but the remaining members continued with church plans to sell their downtown location and build a new campus in the suburbs, retaining the church name.

“I offered leadership to, first of all, find a place to meet and get them moved, and to move forward on, from raising money, getting the plans directed, getting them organized to go through construction.”

Duncan led East End Church six months into its construction of a new building west of downtown and through a successful pastoral search, with the new pastor remaining 10 years. “Then when I went back,” he recounted. “I was interim pastor again. They gave me the title there of interim pastor emeritus.”

While teaching and mentoring Hood, who is a young husband, father, and bivocational pastor, Duncan was concerned that Hood did not have a retirement fund and told him about GuideStone Financial Resources and other services.

Hood was pastoring a National Baptist Convention congregation when he signed up for courses at the seminary extension at First Church, Clarksville. He was disappointed with correspondence courses he was taking at the time from Samford University in Birmingham.

“Some things that we were doing in the Missionary Baptist church, I wanted us to be able to go a little bit further, but I just really didn’t have the resources,” Hood said, “and when I say resources, not necessarily funds, but people who could come in and talk to not only me but the church that I pastored, more about missions and being more mission-minded.

“When I got to studying about the Southern Baptists and then Dr. Duncan started telling me more about it, he partnered with me right there in our association (Golden Triangle Association in Columbus), and I went under their watch care and was able to take a Missionary Baptist church and be dually aligned with the Southern Baptists. That was all because of Dr. Bill Duncan.”

When Hood finished the eight classes at the extension center, Duncan drove with Hood to New Orleans Seminary’s main campus

in New Orleans. He helped Hood secure a scholarship through the McCaskey Center and walked with him as he enrolled in Leavell College. Hood earned a Master of Divinity in July 2020 and is now earning a doctorate in church planting, also at New Orleans Seminary.

After Duncan retired as a director of missions at Golden Triangle Association, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board recruited him to its church planting team where he enjoyed helping pastors plant churches across the state. Duncan's expertise in church planting has guided Hood in his plans to move to Hernando to plant a new church, which is being sponsored by Longview Point Church there. Hood hopes to launch the church next year.

Hood appreciates the knowledge Duncan has shared during their friendship. "The thing that I most admire about Dr. Duncan is he doesn't mind sharing wisdom and knowledge with individuals who will listen, and I mean he's a very smart and intelligent man," Hood said, "and then, wherever he can help ... whatever he can do, Dr. Duncan is willing to do it, and he goes over and beyond – and again, he doesn't have to do anything.

"To be able to take the time to help an individual like me to avoid some of the bruises and the bumps that he experienced down the road and everything, and to be that voice, to be that father to help guide... he means the world to me."

Brian Hood, church planter

"He could easily go home, sit down in his recliner and rightfully so, because he has put in the time, he has put in the effort over the years, and say that 'I am done,' and everybody else has to get it the best way that they know how to get it. To be able to take the time to help an individual like me to avoid some of the bruises and the bumps that he experienced down the road and everything, and to be that voice, to be that father to help guide... he means the world to

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