

Yellow Creek Church celebrates 50 years with pastor Stanley Magill

*By Tony Martin
Editor*

Yellow Creek Church, a rural congregation in Tishomingo County near Iuka, has a unique claim to fame: it has had only one pastor in its history. Stanley Magill has faithfully served as the church's pastor for 50 years.

On Dec. 1, the church honored Magill with a recognition and celebratory service. While the event was intended to be a surprise, it was noted that keeping such a secret from the pastor proved challenging.

Ray Burks, Associational Mission Strategist for the Tishomingo County Baptist Association, praised Magill during the service. "There are many preachers that can preach. There are pastors that can pastor, but to find a preacher and a pastor that's a leader is rare, and Brother Stanley is that. You can't look at the modern history of this association and not see how Brother Stanley has led. The average stay of a Southern Baptist pastor is between three and four years, and you've exceeded that, and for that we are grateful."

Burks also read a letter from Jeff Iorg, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, which stated: "It is rare a pastor is able to complete 50 years in a single location. God has blessed your ministry, and through you, has abundantly blessed the wonderful people of Yellow Creek Baptist Church."

John Pace, director of the Leadership Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), shared additional

remarks, noting Magill's long tenure in ministry. "Brother Stanley has had 64 years in ministry, 50 years at Yellow Creek here with you. I did some quick math on that. You do realize that he's preached about 5,200 sermons to y'all if he preaches two times a week?"

Pace also brought greetings from Shawn Parker, Executive Director-Treasurer of the MBCB, who wrote: "Congratulations on your 50th anniversary as the pastor of Yellow Creek Baptist Church. This remarkable achievement is both impressive and encouraging to those of us who can celebrate with you ... I also want to acknowledge that such an achievement is the result of the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit during the course of these many years."

A Life of Service

Magill has served as a co-vocational pastor, balancing his ministry with a career in public education. Parker noted that co-vocational ministry has been a backbone of Mississippi Baptist life.

"I surrendered to the call to preach at the age of 18," Magill said. "I had tried to do something else about a year earlier, and that didn't work. I guess I preached my first sermon at Oak Hill Baptist Church in Pontotoc County after I finished community college."

Magill's ministry began in 1960, following Harold Bryson, a noted professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Mississippi College. After six and a half years, Magill moved to Tishomingo County to pastor New Prospect Church in 1966.

He later joined Iuka Church as an associate pastor with a focus on missions. During this time, Magill revitalized the original North Crossroads Church, which had dwindled to just four active members. With the support of a few couples from Iuka, the revitalized church was commissioned in 1977 and

renamed Yellow Creek Church.

Challenges and Triumphs

Magill experienced significant challenges during his time at Yellow Creek, including the destruction of the church building in a fire in 1991.

“We were able to get a couple of pews out, some of the songbooks, and the Hammond organ and piano before it burned,” Magill said. “The building couldn’t be salvaged.”

For a time, the congregation met in a fire station and a nearby vacant house. Mississippi Baptists provided a mobile unit to serve as a temporary church building. Rebuilding began slowly, with volunteers contributing labor to complete the new sanctuary and fellowship hall.

“We paid as we went,” Magill said. “When we had our dedication service, we had new pews, new furniture, and everything in the Sunday School situated. It was all paid for.”

Balancing Roles

Magill retired from public education in 2001 after serving as a teacher, administrator, and principal. Balancing his dual roles was often challenging, particularly when sermon preparation and hospital visitation coincided with his responsibilities as an educator.

“Still, I know that not all bivocational pastors are educators, but I know quite a few are. And I had an opportunity to be with some children that needed some guidance,” Magill said.

The Key to Longevity

Reflecting on his 50 years at Yellow Creek, Magill offered three guiding principles for pastoral longevity: “Preach the word. Pray, and love your people.”

Through hardships and triumphs, Magill's ministry has been a testament to faithfulness and dedication, leaving an indelible mark on Yellow Creek Church and the surrounding community.