

Rev. Samuel Russell and Ms. Grace Estes, Sr.



Churches Served: Dad's call was to struggling churches or to places there was not a Cumberland church. His farm background had prepared him for planting seed and waiting for the harvest. With that faith he successfully planted churches. His first charge was Zinn's Chapel, a small village near Altus, Oklahoma. The family arrived there the middle of April, 1928, with five children and one to be born any minute. The Estes family arrived but the manse was still occupied. The movers for the Estes had to get their truck back to Oklahoma City by six that evening. The only option was to unload the Estes' furnishings into the church. They hung a curtain around the furniture with room for the family to live in the church until the manse was vacated. The last day of April a baby girl was born to the Estes family in the church with a doctor attending. He joked that it was the first time he'd experienced a holy delivery. The event caused quite a stir in the community. Most of the church members stood outside for the birthing then claimed the baby as theirs! It was the beginning of a very close relationship between preacher's family and the people they served. The resident of the manse did not return until the middle of May. It was there that Pastor Sam (as he was affectionately referred to) learned exactly what a call to the ministry meant. It was a call to take care of cleaning the church, building the fire in the pot-bellied stove to warm the church for services in winter, opening windows and propping open the door in summer at least an hour before meeting time, and repairing frozen pipes and roof leaks once discovered. Yes, a preacher truly was responsible for every need of the church. No office hours - no office. He was on call twenty-four hours a day to church members, as well as the whole community. No rest, just blissful service.

Offices Held: Throughout his many years of ministry, God placed him in charges in Missouri, Texas, Kentucky, Oklahoma and interim work in New Mexico. Wherever he served it was with heartfelt love for the people, integrity, and total devotion to the faithful God who walked beside him all the way. While he gratefully served and loved all the churches he was privileged to serve, he was especially grateful for his part in Liberty Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Muskogee Oklahoma, the joy of serving as organizing minister and pastor of the Church in Odessa, Texas, the time serving as interim pastor to the church in

Albuquerque, New Mexico and finally just two years before his death he was thrilled to be instrumental in establishing the St. Luke Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

Information provided by the donor: God guided us in the midst of the Great Depression. Those were bitterly hard and not a good time to be going into the ministry. Mary Grace Barefoot Estes, his faithful wife and staunchest supporter often said, "God knew we had this family when He called you to preach. Let Him handle it."

Ministers had no set salary in those days so it was necessary for the preacher to do secular work in order to support his family. It meant working in the cotton patch of one of the members, working as janitor at the courthouse, or a host of other jobs. Nothing came easy! Pastor Sam loved his family dearly and would fight a circle saw to be protect one or all of them. He never preached "at" his family, but he never missed an opportunity to teach them the principles of God.

Church members sometimes could only contribute produce from their farm rather than money. They would bring food to the preacher as their contribution to God. At other times there might be a rap at the front door about six o'clock and there would be the whole church family standing on the front porch with food for an old fashioned 'pounding' for the preacher's family. A pound of sugar, a 'gunny sack' of Irish potatoes, three pounds of coffee, cans of vegetables, salt and pepper and other spices, cheese - just all sorts of food - and a big can of lard and jars of Grandma's peaches. All of that food so welcome and appreciated, but the fun and fellowship the rest of the evening with hot chocolate and popcorn made tending the flock worth every effort. It was after an occasion like that when the preacher's kids learned to tithe by example. Since he had no salary, Preacher Sam took each item of anything given to his family and placed a price on it. When through pricing he took ten percent of it to someone more needy than his family. It was sometimes hard to imagine anyone being more needy than his own family, but no one objected to his action. "Give to God what belongs to God and to the Government that which belongs to the Government."

Life was by no means easy. Pastor Sam did not expect it to be. The hardest part for him were the times his children had need of a dollar or two for a school project, and he would have to let them know he did not have it to give them right then. If one happened to suggest to him to ask the church for money, they received the usual answer, "God knows just how rich to make me." He may have walked off whispering the first line of his favorite Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want".

Our father was devoted, dedicated and determined to be true to his calling to the best he possibly could. Constantly studying the Word, ever learning and totally dedicated to teaching the truths of the Scripture, he was grateful for the privilege of serving wherever God put him. He never aspired to pastor a huge church. He only desired to serve the best he could and to leave the church and the manse in better shape than when he came.

He died as he lived, giving God the praise for his church, for a loving family, and especially his faithful helpmate, Grace, "Who worked beside me every step of the way." To God be the Glory!

Endowment provided by: Daughter, Mrs. Olive Boston