

# What We Have

Bubba Garner

"How's your work going?" I suppose that is one of the questions I am most often asked. That and "Is Bubba your *real* name?" There's a story behind both of my answers. The latter is sometimes a chore. The former is always a pleasure.

I love to tell people about where I am privileged to preach. I'm proud of my association with the Southside church and the reputation she has in and outside the city of Pasadena. I'm proud of her history and excited about her future. Because I think what we have here is pretty special.

**We have elders who lead.** The seven men who shepherd the flock here each feel a personal responsibility for the sheep they oversee. It is evident in the elders' meetings. It is obvious in the way they make announcements. They have a genuine concern for every member of the congregation. Even when they must exercise discipline, it is done only when all other alternatives have been exhausted. They make plans to ensure the spiritual nourishment of our people and challenge us to achieve goals that they themselves are striving to attain. "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account" (Heb. 13:17). Our elders make that an easy passage to follow. We just follow the leaders.

**We have deacons who serve.** Visitors often compliment and comment on our reverent and orderly worship services. Such is the case in large part because of the work of our seventeen deacons. From the comfort of the building to making sure everyone is in place, these men see after our needs, usually having to handle some unpredictable and unforeseen emergency. Though their work is sometimes a physical assignment, it is nonetheless a spiritual service. Though their duty is often behind the scenes, it is always seen and admired through heaven's eyes. "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 3:13). That is certainly the case with our deacons, servants of God.

**We have preachers who care.** This is a hard paragraph to write, because there is the danger of it sounding self-serving. But your three preachers care about you. We want the very best for you. Sometimes, that means we have to say things that sting a little bit. These hard sayings are not intended to hurt but to help. They are done not just out of duty but out of love. That same love motivates us to preach the whole counsel of God, to tell people what was important enough for the Lord to say. It is not our concern to be politically correct or popular in public opinion. We want the will of man to be brought into submission to the word of God. "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16). Your salvation. Now that's what we care about.

**We have members who give.** And I don't just mean money, though you certainly do that generously and liberally. Our members give their time. Our people give their abilities. They give their energy, their emotions, their devotion. But most of all, they give themselves. While the rest of the world seems to be focused on what they can take with them, we have people who believe it is more blessed to give than to receive. "For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord...but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God" (2 Cor. 8:3,5). Paul said that about the churches of Macedonia. The same thing could be said about the saints in Pasadena.

"How's your work going?" It's going quite well. We are by no means a perfect church, but we should be proud of what we have here. And we should be proud to tell other people about it and invite them to come visit our services. After all, our desire ought to be that everyone out there have what we have here.