

Biographical Information for Dan M. Thornton

I was born and raised in West Columbia, South Carolina. My family began going to the Baptist Church when I was nine years old. Very soon I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, became very active in church, and at age twelve felt and accepted a call to the gospel ministry. At Brookland-Cayce High School I was in the band. We had an excellent band director who taught me the value of a leader. We won many national and state championships and represented South Carolina in President Kennedy's inaugural parade.

After high school I attended Furman University, graduating with a B. A. in history in 1967. I met my future wife, Betty Blankenship of Marion, NC, while we were on the staff at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly. I attended Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC, graduating with a M. Div. degree in 1970. I accepted a call as Associate Pastor at the Park Baptist Church, Rock Hill, SC.

During my time at college and seminary, I began to doubt my beliefs and moved theologically to an agnostic position. Finally in 1973 I resigned my church and moved to Marion, NC. Our daughter was born in Rock Hill, SC, and our son was born in Rutherfordton, NC. I taught in the Marion Elementary School for a few years before going to Marion Manufacturing in the Industrial Engineering department. I became an industrial engineer and later a department manager. I owned my own business for a period of time and later became an international management consultant. During this time I remained very active in the Baptist Church as a deacon, music director, church treasurer, and Sunday School teacher.

We moved and began going to the Presbyterian Church. During this time my faith began to grow and in 1987 I accepted a call to the Forest Park Presbyterian Church, Forest Park, GA, (Atlanta area). While at Forest Park I enrolled as a doctoral student at Columbia Theological Seminary. I initiated and guided our church into a merger with another church and organized the First Presbyterian Church, Jonesboro, GA. After successfully completing the merger and guiding the church for another two years, I was called to the Newland Presbyterian Church, Newland, NC. During my ministry in Newland we increased the membership of a Newland mission and organized the Fletcher Presbyterian Church, the first church formed in the new Presbytery of Western North Carolina. I later accepted a call to the Second Presbyterian Church, Salisbury, NC. While at Second I completed my doctoral work and earned the D. Min. degree in 1996. During my ministry at Second I experienced significant spiritual growth and could see God at work in my life. I have been active in each of the presbyteries in which I have been a member.

I felt a call into interim ministry and took both years of the interim training at Montreat Assembly. In 2003 I began my interim work, first in Lexington, NC, and later in Dubuque, IA, where I helped the church go through a very difficult period in the life of that church. I then served a church in Ceres (Modesto), CA, as Interim Pastor. In CA I served on the Committee on Ministry and on a Presbytery Commission. I will now be serving the First Presbyterian Church in Marion as their Interim Pastor.

I have been active in the Rotary and other civic clubs, ministerial associations, volunteer hospital chaplaincies, ecumenical activities with local churches, and Crop Walk.

Credo for Dan M. Thornton

I believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, that it is "given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life".¹ The Bible records the revelation of God to humanity. The Bible is the revealed Word of God, and therefore; is the primary source of spiritual authority. The Bible is the Church's only infallible rule of faith and practice.

God the Father created the universe, is all powerful, and is the Ruler of the universe. He is holy, just, and eternal. "God is spirit"² and "God is love".³ God is the God who acted in history and who acts today.

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem humanity from the sin that had enslaved it. Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us.⁴ Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ won the final victory over sin and death. Jesus is the means by which all are to come to God.

Jesus told us that he would send the Comforter to be with us. Jesus has worked throughout the ages and works today through the Holy Spirit.⁵ The Holy Spirit is the means by which Jesus is at work today in the Church and the world.

I believe in the Trinity. God has revealed Himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

God created humanity in His own image. God's creation was good but humanity sinned when we refused to accept the sovereignty of God over our lives.⁶ Sin came into the world in the Garden of Eden and we have been conceived in sin ever since. Satan works to condemn us. We cannot save ourselves. Salvation is a free gift and comes only through faith in Jesus Christ.⁷ God's grace and salvation provide for complete restoration for sinners who repent.

The church is the community of those called by God into fellowship with Him and with each other to know and do his will.⁸ Through the Church, God provides for our sanctification through preaching, teaching, Bible study, prayer and the sacraments. God calls us to a life of holiness. The church must be the place of worship, proclamation, and remembrance and is the body for the retelling of the story of the mighty acts of God among the people of God. It is a nurturing and caring community. Jesus has given us the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you".⁹

Sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant of grace.¹⁰ Baptism represents the admission into God's covenant people. Jesus instructed us make disciples and to baptize. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus as a perpetual remembrance of his sacrificial death on the cross. Jesus is spiritually present at the Lord's Supper.¹¹

Footnotes:

1. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 6.002
2. John 4:24
3. I John 4:16
4. John 1:14
5. Galatians 4:6
6. Romans 5:12

7. John 14:6
8. Ephesians 1:10
9. Matthew 28:19-20
10. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 6.149
11. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 6.161