

the internal convictions that ate away at Dr. Martin during these days. Life's pressures and the pressure of the Holy Spirit began to simmer Dr. Martin's soul.

"One night I almost committed suicide. One night I was so upset; so lonely and depressed. Even though I had a car [and] I had a house. I pulled out my service revolver and I was going to kill myself. Something said to me, 'You dummy! Don't you know the answer is Jesus?'"

"I went to church that next Sunday," continued Dr. Martin, "two days later. I walked up to the pastor after the service was over. I told the pastor, 'I want to make a re-dedication.' Man! It was like everybody knew this was going to happen. When I said that, my pastor started hollering! People started looking and saying, 'I know what happened: Jimmy done repented!' Mother was crying and hollering and shouting and I felt like someone just poured Clorox in my life. Everything was clean."

At this point in our conversation, my heart filled with calm. The anxieties and troubles of my work day were gone—gone as it they were blown away by the soft breeze of the fan in Dr. Martin's office. Then it was time to talk about the church, about Mt. Olivet, its history, and Dr. Martin's call to serve as a minister of God's Word.

What constitutes a call to ministry is the subject of many debates and testimonials. Dr. Martin's call came through a dream in 1978. In this dream, he saw himself enveloped in a white light. "I remember that thing so clearly," he says. "A white light shining over my head, down onto an open Bible and a voice saying leave all these friends and go." His mother confirmed his calling along with his pastor. His mother knew that he had the call long before the dream. But, trusting in the Lord, she never said anything to him, not wanting to put anything in his head. She wanted the Holy Spirit to speak when the time was right.

Today, when Dr. Martin preaches, he promotes the truths of his favorite verse, II Timothy 2:2: "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." He wrote these words on the platform at the front of the church before the carpet was installed. It is his goal that people will take the principles they hear from the pulpit and go out to their schools, their jobs, and their homes and apply them to their lives.

Social issues are not the thrust of his preaching. "The pulpit is my main power. I don't think that as a pastor I can influence society by serving on a lot of committees. It takes a lot of time away from my studies and

a lot of time away from my family. So what I have chosen to do—and I feel like the Lord has led me to do this—is to empower my people through preaching and teaching."

But how did Dr. Martin come to Portland? What's the link between a young man growing up in Bluefield, West Virginia and Mt. Olivet Baptist Church? That link lies in a relationship Dr. Martin established with Dr. Curtis Mitchel during their years of study together at Trinity Evangelical Seminary in Newberg, Illinois. It was Dr. Mitchel who carried the message that Mt. Olivet was looking for a pastor and encouraged Dr. Martin to apply for the position. He



sent his portfolio to the Mt. Olivet pulpit committee and, after the interview process, was asked to come serve as pastor.

Upon accepting the position and experiencing congregational growth, Dr. Martin brought his particular vision to bear on the expansion plans for Mt. Olivet. The old church, founded in the 1890's, or in 1907 (there is some debate over the exact date), had reached its seating limit. It is said that the original founders of the church used to gather together in a house and were sponsored by the First Baptist Church in downtown Portland. One of Mt. Olivet's stranger anecdotes recounts that a local branch of the KKK donated lumber to have the church built on the east side of the Willamette River.

Working with his board at Mt. Olivet, Dr. Martin pursued a vision for the best location for expansion and growth. Dr. Martin describes the search:

"I called a couple of realtors and asked them to drive me around to look at some places. They showed me places that were either too far out in the suburbs, or the building was too small, or without enough parking." After much driving around, Dr. Martin asked his secretary if she knew any realtors. She introduced him to her realtor.

Dr. Martin continues, "He showed me an old Jehovah's Witness building and I said, 'No, it's too small. It's got two stories. I don't want steps.' Then the realtor says, 'I have one more place I think you might like.'" So he drove me out to North Chautauqua, where we are located now. We were going down the road, and when he got to the place, here was this old rundown supermarket—a junk building. The realtor said, 'This is it.' But when he showed it to me, it was like this big explosion of light came into my mind and I thought, 'That's it!'" Here Dr. Martin pauses for a moment, the excitement of that moment dancing in his eyes.

"And I said out loud, 'That's it!' And it had a For Sale sign on it. It had plenty of parking space. I started thinking about what you could do with that thing. I came back and presented it to the building committee and they said, 'No way!' But you know, they tried everything to find pieces of land and other buildings. And everything they found that looked like it was possible, the Lord would shut the door. And they'd have to go back to that building. And they didn't want to go back. They'd start looking at something else and the Lord would shut the door."

"So, finally, after months wrangling, they said, 'We'll try to buy this building.' And so we went through the legal maneuvers and finally got it," Dr. Martin concludes with a laugh.

Architects were set to work on the building and soon construction was under way. Today, the building stands as a testament to God's faithfulness. There is a lot more work to be done to complete all the parts of the Mt. Olivet "edifice," and yet, as I sit in the building on this Sunday Morning and hear the singing and hear the word preached, I think of how God takes every thread of people's lives and weaves them in His way; sometimes weaving them even when we are wandering from His way. Again I think, This is it! The hair rises on my neck and I realize again how faithful God has been to me. I thank God that we have hope in our Lord and His Word. Thank God that we have the testimonies of others, like Dr. Martin, to keep us focused on God's goodness and His faithfulness.

Thank God that we have the testimonies. ■