

North Attleboro church installs 34th pastor since 1769

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- Jul 27, 2018

The First Baptist Church in North Attleboro is raising money to help defray the cost of repairing the church's bell that toppled after the wooden cradle supporting the bell rotted and gave way. Recently installed pastor Stephen Trimble, at right, pokes his head up through the scuttle to the bell tower.
MARK STOCKWELL/THE SUN CHRONICLE/

When Stephen Trimble was a teenager, the pastor at his church in Hyannis, where Trimble grew up, suggested to him that he might possess gifts that would make him an exceptional ordained minister.

"I sort of put it on the back burner," Trimble, 56, said.

Little did he know that a few decades later he would be installed as just the 34th pastor since 1769 at the First Baptist Church in North Attleboro, an honor that Trimble said he is humbled by.

"I'm simply sitting on the shoulders of previous pastors who have been called by God," Trimble said. "I get to add to that. To move the story of Jesus along to help people know they are loved by God."

Before Trimble found his way to North Attleboro, he was a student at the University of New Hampshire where he lived with six other Christian men in a home owned by the chaplain.

“When I went to college I lived in a Christian community through a program of the United Campus Ministry,” Trimble explained. “We agreed to live a certain lifestyle under God.”

While at college, another pastor from his school’s ministry suggested again that Trimble had a unique ability to connect with God and people, and encouraged him to check out seminaries in the area.

By the time he was 20, Trimble said he felt the “calling from God.”

“I had a number of people at that point say that I should take my gift of voice and put it to use,” Trimble said. “And I felt God saying ‘check this out’.”

Trimble attended the Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre where he earned his masters in Divinity in 1988.

In his 30 years as a pastor, Trimble has served at four churches, including North Attleboro.

“I tend to see the same issues in every town,” Trimble said. “But I was surprised about how much crime takes place around here, pretty serious crime. Every town has its own issues. We’re fallen people.”

In every community Trimble serves, he said his goals remain similar.

“I want to help people understand their place in the world,” he said. “I want to give people the opportunity to do something important. They can always come and share what they’d like to see done in the church as well.”

Since Trimble began his work as a pastor in 1988, he’s noticed some reoccurring issues that tend to drive people away from the church.

“One is a sense of prosperity,” he said. “When life is going well for people, they tend to not engage with God.”

Trimble also mentioned a lack of desire by newer generations to be a part of a church community.

“People have been sullied by the lifestyle and story they hear about church,” Trimble said. “The image of church life turns people off.”

One issue that Trimble is actively tackling now is what he calls an “ignorance towards the Bible.”

“People are fearful towards the Bible,” Trimble said. “When you don’t grow up practicing something it becomes the furthest thing from your mind.”

Trimble and the First Baptist Church are trying to combat this disconnect with the Bible with a class where the Bible is studied and taught directly. According to Trimble, 25 community members have already signed up for the first class.

Trimble also said he is working to increase youth involvement in the church.

“I’m trying to find ways to have young people, millennials, do more mission work in the church,” he said. “What others have found is that (young people) would rather do something, help someone, instead of attending meetings or gatherings.”

In general, Trimble hopes to bring more people into the church by making the church a bigger part of the community.

“My goal is to get us out of the building and into the community,” he said. “That can mean anything; I want to be a part of a North Attleboro ‘clean up’, have more outdoor programs, maybe have some concerts for the community.

“We want to be an engaged partner for people. Not so insulated. We want to get out, and make a difference in the lives of people.”