



## An Exemplary Servant

By Doug Rice



Dr. Thomas Harrington, Ph.D.; Lt. Col, USAF (Retired); Stewards Foundation Secretary

Solomon said that in this life “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” [Eccl 9:10]. Perhaps no one individual that I have known exemplifies Solomon’s words more than Tom Harrington.

I first met Tom and his lovely wife, Carol, when they visited Wheatland Bible Chapel in the late summer of 2008. The warm fellowship felt with Tom and Carol was almost instantaneous and they decided the assembly at Wheatland was where the Lord wanted them. When Tom was asked if he would be willing to speak at the Family Bible Hour, his characteristically humble response was, “yes, but I do not seek the platform.” I have never known Tom to look for the spotlight, just a place to serve, doing whatever his hand finds to do with all his might.

Tom’s service at Stewards Foundation began when he was elected as a Trustee in

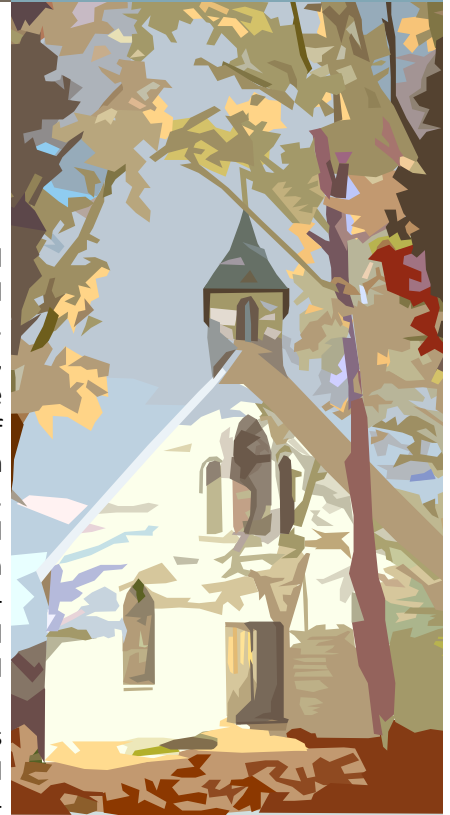
September 2006. In the fall of 2007, the board determined that Stewards Foundation needed a full-time Public Relations Representative. After considering the requisite qualifications, Tom was asked if he would consider taking the position. Having recently retired as Dean of the Business School at Fort Lewis College, Tom agreed to take on this new field of service. Stepping down from the board, Tom and Carol moved to Dallas in June 2008, for him to begin his work at Stewards Foundation. He continued as Public Relations Representative until the summer of 2009, when he was nominated to rejoin the Stewards Foundation board.

Included in Tom’s many years of service is a distinguished 20-year career in the United States Air Force, achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Having completed his doctorate while serving in the Air Force, Tom embarked upon a career in academia following his military retirement. For the next 27 years, he taught at numerous universities, holding the position of Dean at two of these. It was not unusual for Tom to take on a struggling program and turn it around through hard work. While these institutions profited from his efforts, his students were the greatest beneficiaries of Tom’s dedicated service.

Tom retired from his academic career in 2013, or so he thought, as in 2014, another opportunity to serve came calling. He was asked to fill the vacant chair / faculty position in the Business Department at Emmaus Bible College. He continued in that position until 2016 when he transitioned to online teaching for Emmaus.

After 47 years of marriage, the Lord called Carol home in 2017. A few months later Tom accepted the Associate Dean position at a college in southeastern Florida. Tom finally ended his career in academia

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# *I CORINTHIANS 4:2, "IT IS REQUIRED*

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when he retired from this position in 2018, and moved into a retirement community in Fort Myers, Florida.

Even in retirement Tom continued to serve, devoting time to several assembly-related boards. After some 19 years, Tom has decided it is time to retire from his faithful service to Stewards Foundation. Not surprisingly, one of his reasons for retiring from the SF board, is so he can devote more time personally serving at the retirement community.

*“whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” Eccl 9:10*

Not long after moving in, Tom was asked to lead a Sunday afternoon hymn-sing and Bible study for the residents. He continued this activity until it was suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions. Not one to sit around, Tom found a way to serve in a practical way. A fellow-resident needed daily assistance in order to continue living in the retirement section of the community. Tom offered to serve as an essential care-giver to alleviate the need for costly outside care. The hope is that the Sunday afternoon gatherings can be resumed in the near future. In the meantime, Tom happily serves to meet the needs of another.

As Tom steps off the SF board, he not only leaves a legacy of service, but the footprints of an exemplary servant. Those of us who know Tom, and have had the privilege of working with him, readily find in him what Paul saw in Onesimus, he is not just a servant, “but above a servant, a brother beloved.”

In honor of Tom, you will find below the record of his service to Stewards Foundation, and some of his thoughts as he departs the board this spring.

Tom’s service with SF includes: Secretary 2010-2020; Executive Committee 2006-2008 and 2009-2018; Loan Policy Committee 2010-2014; Health Care Committee 2010-Present; and Finance, Investment and Compensation Committee 2010-Present (Chairman 2015-Present).

“Although I began an association with Stewards Foundation (SF) as a trustee in 2006, my first awareness of Stewards Foundation occurred earlier than that when I met Dr. John Englehart, D.O., in his home town of Marble Hill Missouri. Carol, my dear wife of 47 years before she went to be with the Lord, was a cousin to Dr. John and during our visits to Marble Hill, Dr. John introduced me to the work of non-profit

foundations with focus on Stewards Foundation.

My next recollection is the importance of having related partnerships. For example, SF teams up with Assembly Care Ministries and Believers Stewardship Services in giving information sessions where assemblies learn about the unique operations of the individual foundations as well as the shared mission of building relationships with New Testament patterned assemblies.

Another significant recollection during my time with Stewards Foundation, was the Board of Trustee’s selection of our current Executive Director, Mr. Doug Rice, eleven years ago. Doug lives the mission of building relationships with assemblies. He does this, with the excellent assistance of his staff, Program Manager Cynthia Looney, and Executive Assistant Nancy Carroll, by facilitating the purchase and construction of buildings for assemblies, and more importantly, by building spiritual foundations. Doug’s education and practice as an architect enables him to guide the building process from design to use of the structure for building those spiritual foundations. Doug freely gives of his time when assemblies have questions beyond building structures such as zoning and licensing questions; and engages the services of an attorney when legal questions arise.”

## **New Hampshire Avenue Gospel Chapel Silver Springs, Maryland**

New Hampshire Avenue Gospel Chapel had its humble beginnings as an Assembly on April 30th, 1916. It was first housed in the residences of believers in Washington, DC, and then Twinning City. Subsequently, the Assembly relocated to two different rented buildings. On February 1, 1938, the Assembly incorporated under the name “Christians Gathered Unto the Name of The Lord Jesus Christ” before moving to its own building on South Dakota Avenue.

The migration of believers to the suburbs of Washington, DC, along with the difficulty of finding suitable street parking, prompted the Assembly to buy land on New Hampshire Avenue in Silver Spring, Maryland. The new location afforded more than

# *IN STEWARDS THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL”*

adequate space to build a new chapel with on-site private parking.

On March 27, 1961, the Assembly reincorporated under the name New Hampshire Avenue Gospel Chapel, Inc, and obtained tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(3) religious corporation. The first meeting was held in the new building on May 24, 1964 with about 30 communicant members. The facility was large enough to accommodate 200, but the Assembly quickly grew, especially the Sunday School. Soon additional Sunday school classrooms had to be retrofitted onto the new Chapel building. Unfortunately, the original HVAC was inadequate for the addition. The new classrooms were too hot in the summer and too cold during winter making the use of space heaters necessary.

The Assembly continued meeting in the same building for the next 50 years until it was felt that the facilities were out-of-date and inadequate. The Kitchen and lower-level Fellowship area were too small, hindering Sunday morning fellowship, meals and Wednesday AWANA kids club. In addition, the lack of accessible facilities was an inconvenience for those who had grown older.

Different ways to remediate the situation were considered, including searching for land to build a new facility. A Building Fund was established for the purpose of setting aside surplus funds while continuing the support of full-time workers, missionaries and organizations. The believers gave generously resulting in increased savings that were earmarked for the much-anticipated project. All this was done in light of the fact that those who were responsible for construction of the existing building paid off the previous mortgage leaving the Assembly debt free.

*“Like in the case of Moses building the tabernacle, the Lord provided technically skilled men...”*

The Elders and Trustees toured a number of properties, but none were found to be suitable. After much prayer, the decision was made to add onto and remodel the existing facility in lieu of relocating. Immediately deliberation began as to what type of addition should be made, and what improvements to the existing building were needed.

Desired facilities in the new addition included, a larger Kitchen, additional classrooms and nurseries, a high school regulation

size basketball court, accommodations for AWANA activities and accessible Restrooms. Improvements to the existing building included adding an elevator, and renovation of the Foyer for transition to the new addition.

Three architectural firms were considered before deciding to work with one that collaborated closely with a general contractor recommended by Brooklyn Gospel Chapel in Baltimore. These key contacts enabled us to select the most cost-effective addition. After going through many iterations, the final design was selected. Like in the case of Moses building the tabernacle, the Lord provided technically skilled men in the Assembly to steer the design and oversee the plans to the point of construction.



The estimated cost of construction for the final design made it clear that a loan would be necessary to accomplish the desired facility. Thankfully, Stewards Foundation approved a loan for the funds required to supplement the Building Fund.

Construction documents were completed and bids solicited from several general contractors. After some negotiations, the contractor recommended by the Baltimore Brooklyn assembly was awarded the contract. Unfortunately, during the longer than expected process of designing and changes and acquiring building permits, construction costs increased significantly.

By the time the permitting process was complete, the estimated cost had been exceeded by a considerable amount. Fortunately, additional costs were met through value engineering to reduce the scope of work, and Stewards Foundation’s willingness to increase the loan amount. The staff at Stewards Foundation was promptly responsive and helpful throughout the lengthy loan process.

A Certificate of Occupancy was granted on April 5, 2020. The Assembly has however not begun using the new addition and remodeled existing building due to the ongoing COVID pandemic restrictions.

Psalms 126:3, “The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad”

## News You Can Use

Last November we conducted a Zoom presentation on some of the history and current services of Stewards Foundation. Attendance was good and the participation active among those present. At the time, I indicated that future presentations were being planned, including one on Stewards Foundation’s loans.

From my conversations with assembly leaders, it is evident that more information about loans in general, and the details of our loans in particular would be beneficial. Our next virtual presentation on Stewards Foundation Loans – from A to Z will be conducted on Saturday, February 27th from 9:00 – 11:00 AM CST.

We hope this presentation will be helpful to those from assemblies that may be considering a Stewards Foundation loan, but all are welcome to attend. Time will be set aside for questions following the presentation.

Please call the office and let us know if you would like to attend this virtual presentation. We will provide meeting information once details are finalized.

If your assembly is considering a loan, we would be happy to set up a virtual meeting to discuss specific loan details. This meeting would be tailored to focus on your assembly’s particular situation. Call us if your assembly is interested.



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