

2017 Annual Moderators' Address

MACEDONIA BAPTIST UNION

ANNUAL SESSION

Bell Pond Baptist Church, Williston, S.C.

January 28, 2017

MODERATOR'S ADDRESS

Rev. Norman O'neal, Jr.

Introduction:

To Vice Moderator Michael Davis, Association Moderator Harris Barker, Vice Moderator Floyd Hughes, to all former moderators, pastors, ministers, deacons, delegates, officers and friends of the "Macedonia Baptist Union" and to all of you who make up this Annual Session of the "Union", I greet you in the name that is above every name, **Jesus the Christ!**

Let me begin by thanking our immediate past moderator, Rev. Beverley Ashley, because she has been a great source of support, encouragement and insight over these past 12 months. **Thank you!**

I am indeed humbled and grateful to "Almighty God" for what he has done in my life and yours as believers in Christ. My friends, to have become personally involved in this "Union" many years ago and to have ascended to this highpoint of leadership among my peers is truly a work only God can do. Although I had worked in church almost all of my life, I've only been personally active in the "Macedonia Baptist Union" during the latter years of my life. As a result I have gained a more personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and my desire to spread the Gospel has thrust me out of my comfort zone. Today, as I stand on the shoulders of the ones who have gone before me, I realize, it is only because of their great leadership and "God's Abundant Grace", that the "Union" is as strong as it is.

Thank you, "Macedonia Baptist Union" for your presence here this morning and your genuine love and support throughout this past year. I want to thank Emma, my wife for her love and support, her sensitivity and encouragement for the responsibilities I undertook when I accepted this position. I don't believe I could have found a better friend, helpmate, and life companion to help me with this task along this journey. You my daring are one of the reasons I praise God each and every day that I live. (We will have been married 40 years June 4, 2017.) Thank you for sticking with me through the good bad and the ugly that comes with living. "I Love You".

Discourse:

In the last year we were saddened, but also rejoiced by the transition from labor to reward several of our deceased brothers and sisters from the churches in this “Union”. In fact, to many for me to name at this time without leaving someone out. My prayer is that God’s Peace will overshadow the bereaved families and bring His “Joy” back into their hearts today.

Psalm 30:5 For His anger *is but for* a moment, His favor *is for* life; Weeping may endure for a night, but joy *comes* in the morning. (NKJV)

We have witnessed the elevation of Rev. Jerry Liggons’, as Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Blackville, S.C., retirement of Rev. Eugene Davis as Pastor of the Bell Pond Baptist Church and many others who has begun to walk in their “Calling”. “To God Be the Glory”. You see my friends, God has shown much favor upon this “Union” and we must give Him and Him only all of the Praise. **Amen!**

I have come here today to give an accounting of my stewardship for this past year. I have represented to the best of my knowledge, this “Union” at various church celebrations, as well as pastors’ anniversaries, banquets, installations services, ordinations ceremonies, conferences, various organizational meetings and trips, and I have enjoyed what I’ve heard and seen. I must admit that there were many events scheduled that I was unable to attend but I always prayed that God would bless each to be what He has ordained them to be. I am very grateful for the support that was provided by our vice moderator and former moderators as they represented this body in my ignorance and absence. I want to say to all of you, **“Thank You”**.

I have met or talked by phone with a number of pastors and ministers from our fellow churches in an attempt to regain their participation and expressed a need for their support. I reminded them that we as a body united must be able to work out any differences that we may have and that it is time to come back into the fold.

Mark 3:24 says, “If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.” (NKJV)

With that in mind, I have formulated an educational plan and structure that I believe is needed for such a time as this. I have communicated with several pastors, ministers, deacons and others about where we are, where I believe we should go and I have concluded that we as a “Union” need to reevaluate and restructure our vision and plan for the future of this institution. Though we have the Congress of Christian Education, and various other entities I always leave each session or meeting asking myself what can we do different that will allow this “Union” to fulfill “God’s Will” and His purpose in this day and time.

Elder Lillie Young has already presented us with an inspiring “Word from the Lord” this morning, so allow me to make some observations and share some of my personal concerns. **Amen!**

I have chosen the theme: **“Make It Plain So I Can See It”**. My brothers and sisters, this is what we must do intentionally as a “Union”, if we plan to be relevant in the **21st Century**. You see, we must present our thoughts

and ideas in such a clear and concise manner that anyone that reads or hear about it can articulate and explain it to others, as if it were their own vision or dream.

Habakkuk 2:1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd (criticized, scolded). **2** And the LORD answered me, and said, "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. **3** For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry". **(King James Version)**

Habakkuk 2:1 What's God going to say to my questions? I'm braced for the worst. I'll climb to the lookout tower and scan the horizon. I'll wait to see what God says, how he'll answer my complaint. **2** And then GOD answered: "Write this. Write what you see. Write it out in big block letters so that it can be read on the run. **3** This vision-message is a witness pointing to what's coming. It aches for the coming—it can hardly wait! And it doesn't lie. If it seems slow in coming, wait. It's on its way. It will come right on time. **(The Message Bible)**

I stood upon my watch as your "Union Moderator" to see what God would have me to do. He said we are to build "**Bridges**" not "**Walls**".

What are bridges? Bridges are structures that provide a way to cross a river, a canyon, and road or to help us understanding that which is not presently known and it connects that which is separated.

You see my friends, we must be connected to our Savior, our community and the world, if we are to fulfill our purpose for the "Kingdom of God". **Why?** Because we must expand the "Kingdom of God" through fellowship of member churches and individuals, by unifying of the "Body of Christ" as we stand for biblical truth. We must go forth speaking with a "voice of hope" as representatives of Christ as we serve the community we are in, with a united and cooperative ministry through strategic planning.

My brothers and sisters, if we are to be effective and well-organized in the work of the Lord in the **21st century**, we are obligated as churches to embrace modern technology (email address, websites, Instagram, Facebook, Periscope, fax machines, etc.). You see the methods of communication of yesterday took several days, which cost a significant amount of money, but today's technology can be accomplished in seconds with one click of a mouse or push of a button. Yes, we as a "Union" and sister churches have to reform our methods and adapt to the time we are currently in.

Macedonia Baptist Union, if we are to keep the young people engaged in this modern era, we must invest more into the future of our children. We must strategically plan and implement that plan with the necessary resources; money, time and effort that will make a difference in the life of our children and the church. You see, a vision that is cast in the past cannot be changed or those cast in the present will be gone in a moment if we do not look

toward the future where they will be more productive and glorify the “Kingdom of God”. I can see that the time has come for us to have a Union” that is politically wise, skillfully run, sound financially, and most of all biblically knowledgeable, as they operate using the principles of the “Kingdom of God”. “Macedonia Baptist Union” if we are to be effective we must work together as one body in Christ Jesus. **Amen!**

Macedonia Baptist Union, much can be achieved if we combine our, strengthens, resources and passions of the Macedonia Association, Union, Congress of Christian Education and all of its auxiliaries. You see, there is nothing that we cannot do with the help of God. For too long we have maintained as it appears to be somewhat separate organizations operating independent of each other. It’s time, it’s time for us to come together and unite in Love.

My friends, a building usually takes months to complete, but only a matter of minutes to be destroyed. So let us not dare go down that avenue because our forefathers forged this “Union” out of hard work, sweat and tears and it would be sinful if we do not keep their “Legacy Alive”. **Can I get a witness?**

There is an old hymn that says;

“A Charge to Keep I Have”

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

Music: Lowell Mason, 1792-1872

Tune: BOYLSTON, **Meter:** SM

1. A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify, a never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky.
2. To serve the **present age**, my calling to fulfill; O may it all my powers engage to do my **Master's will!**
3. Arm me with **jealous care**, as in thy sight to live, and oh, thy servant, Lord, prepare a strict account to give!
4. Help me to watch and pray, and on thyself rely, assured, if I **my trust betray**, I shall forever die.

Church Wesley used **Leviticus 8:36** as the primary inspiration for this hymn. It says, “Keep the charge of the Lord, that ye die not”. (KJV)

1 Kings 2:3 “And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:”

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, (NIV)

Matthew 26:41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (NIV)

Education:

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. “Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children. (NIV)

Conclusion:

Now as I began to close, let me say, if we want to build a building there is a need for mortar if its brick, nails if it's wood or screws if it's metal, to hold it together. **Amen!** So let us starting this year, buildup and strengthen this “Union” with greater knowledge of the scripture, in our position as Pastors and Ministers, Deacons and Deaconess, Trustees and Committee Members, Ushers and Members, Dramatist and Singers, Dancers and Musicians, those who attend, perform and participate in our churches. We need more Love in our “Family of Churches”, more generosity, forgiveness, righteousness, and unity displayed as true brothers and sisters in Christ.

Can I get a witness?

Therefore I propose that we as a “Union” establish a “**certification**” program that gives each participant a diploma or certificate after they have completed monthly or quarterly training programs for the office or position they hold or plan to in the future.

You see we serve a God who is generous, abundant in love, tirelessly reaching out to all of “**Mankind**”. We as His servants are required and created to reflect the glory of our God in the make-up of our very soul, and in our capacity to love one another. Macedonia Baptist Union, we are to be one in the “Spirit of Love”. You see, it is God that bind us together in the Lord with cords that cannot be broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken. (NKJV)

“Macedonia Baptist Union”, I want you to know that I need your approval and support in helping us train, teach and educate the next generation to take our place as leaders and “Worshippers of God”. We're all a part of “God's Body”. So stand with me, agree with me as we undertake a broad an extensive long-term program that will make this “Union” the “Best That It Can Be”. **Why?** Because it is “God's Will” that every one of our needs are met. You are very important to me, to God and this Macedonia Baptist Union. As the singer Jerry Butler said, “Only the Strong Survive”. Therefore, our strength is in the “Wisdom” and knowledge through education concerning “God's Word” and His Plan for “**Mankind**”.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. (NKJV)