

Rev. Paul Nixon



Paul is the pastor of Epicenter Church, a new United Methodist community of faith focused on serving the people who live in the urban expanse of greater Washington DC. Formerly the Director of Congregational Development for the Alabama-West Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church, Paul is the author of several books: *Fling Open the Doors: Giving the Church Away to the Community* (2002); *Healing Spiritual Amnesia: Remembering What it Means to Be the Church* (with Tony Campolo) (2004); *I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church* (2007); and a fourth focusing on urban ministry, now in the works.

Prior to his move to D.C., he served on the extended cabinet of Alabama-West Florida Conference, overseeing congregational development. For nine years, he served on the pastoral team of the 4000 member Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church near Pensacola. Paul was founding pastor of the Community Life Center, the east campus of Gulf Breeze, overseeing it from its conception to 650 in worship attendance. He holds the Doctor of Ministry degree from Southern Methodist University. Paul consults with churches and conferences all across North America, with a special passion for coaching church planters and churches with initiatives to reach new demographic groups in their communities.

Here's what Paul says about his current ministry with Epicenter, an exciting new church start in the D.C. area: "We are a multi-site church with locations in Arlington, Washington and Silver Spring. We will be launching weekly worship services in Arlington and in Downtown DC beginning in the fall of 2008. We anticipate eventually joining the people from our various sites together monthly for a high-energy Epicenter Celebration, with an eclectic blend of music, other art forms, and faith sharing -- a spiritual Earthquake event, where God shakes us up and sends us out to live out God's dreams for the city."

Rev. Dr. Susan K. Smith

Rev. Dr. Susan K. Smith, senior pastor of Advent United Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio, is a 1986 graduate of Yale Divinity School. She received her BA in English Literature from Occidental College and her D. Min. from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

A former reporter, Rev. Smith worked for newspapers in Baltimore and Texas before entering seminary. She also served as an associate producer for WJZ News, as an on-air news reporter for WEAA, the radio station affiliated with Morgan State University in Baltimore, and as a talk show host for "Columbus Today," a locally heard radio program in Columbus, and as an on-air political commentator for a news magazine television program, also produced in Columbus.

Since becoming pastor of Advent United Church of Christ, the church's membership has increased from five members to about 300. In addition to outreach ministries to the city's poor, Rev. Smith's ministry has concentrated on empowering urban youth through an annual summer arts program, which uses the arts to instill confidence in those youth who participate. Through arts immersion and concentration as well on reading, writing and math, the camp has been successful in helping participating youth to perform better academically during the school year. Rev. Smith also serves as minister of music at her church, producing what some have called a "professional choir".

Rev. Smith is a co-president of BREAD, (Building Responsibility, Equity and Dignity), a multi-racial, multi-ethnic social justice organization comprised of over 50 different religious denominations in the city of Columbus. She was recently invited to be a participant in the Oxford Roundtable, an event held at Oxford University in England, where she presented a paper on the tension in America between the United States Constitution and the Holy Bible. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc., a social justice ministry which seeks to empower churches and ministers in urban settings to deal with the problems they face through training, resource development and acquisition, and changing of public policy.

Rev. Smith is now forming a private not-for-profit organization aimed at empowering urban youth all over the United States. Her first project is to get brand new books in public schools in urban and rural America; the first city being targeted is New Orleans, Louisiana.

She is the author of four books, "Carla and Annie," "From Calvary to Victory," "Forgive WHO?" and, in publication now, "Crazy Faith for Everyday People." She is the mother of two children, Caroline, a recent graduate of Spelman College, and Charlie, a student at the University of Cincinnati.

