

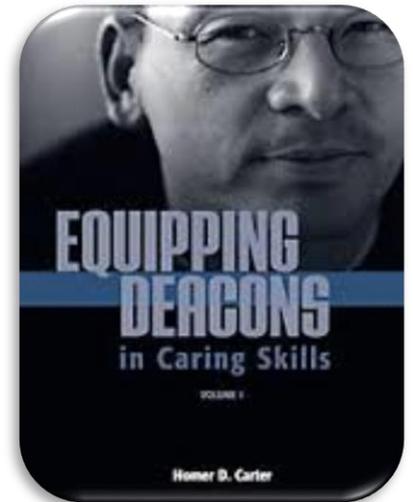
### **Homer Carter was resurrected yesterday morning.**

He apparently crossed over from this life to the next very quietly, in his sleep, at about four o'clock in the morning. His son, Philip, was with him, though death was not expected.

Homer was with us just three weeks ago, together with his daughter, Christy, who drove from her home in Chicago to fly with her Dad from Louisville to Baltimore so he could attend our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Homer had actually just gotten out of the hospital two days prior to that trip, but he was absolutely determined to make the journey, "even if I die on the plane!" I'll come back to that.

I've known about Homer Carter for all of the thirty-three years of my pastoral ministry, though I'd never met him until three weeks ago. I knew of Homer because of his book, *Equipping Deacons in Caring Skills*, which he published in 1980 and which is still in print. I have both the very first edition as well as the current edition of that book, the chapter titles of which are as follows:

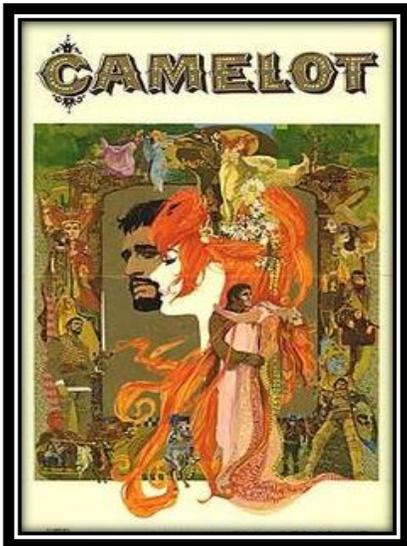
- Power for Ministry
- Basic Caring Skills
- Caring for the Hospitalized and Their Families
- Caring for the Bereaved
- Caring for Those Experiencing Spiritual Doubt and Guilt
- Caring for the Lonely
- Caring for the Needy
- Caring for Church Members in Conflict
- Caring for Those Experiencing Major Life Events
- Caring for the Uprooted
- Caring for Husbands and Wives in Conflict
- Caring for Parents and Children in Conflict
- Caring for the Alcoholic and the Addict
- Caring for the Depressed and Despairing



In these last years of retirement and failing health, Homer has worshiped with the St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, a congregation we served for sixteen years, and so we know many of the same people. We had a great deal in common.

Homer spent most of his professional career as a pastor, and he continued that work in retirement, serving a number of congregations as a trained "Intentional Interim" pastor. Interestingly, Homer served as the Intentional Interim for the Peakland Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia during the period that ended with their call of Steve McNeely to become their pastor, and then he served as Intentional Interim for our congregation after Steve left us to go to Lynchburg!

I talked with Philip a number of times while we were arranging for the trip, and Philip remarked several times about how determined his father was to come to CBF once more. Philip told me yesterday that he finally had to ask what this was all about: "Dad, you've had many invitations of this sort from the congregations you've served, but you've always before declined those invitations. Why are you so determined to return to CBF, especially when your health is so fragile?"



Homer's reply was at once both stunning and humbling: **"Philip, I want to go back once more to CBF because my years at CBF were what I wish my entire ministry had been like."**

I actually heard similar feelings expressed by virtually all of our former pastors and interim pastors. The reality that is CBF has been unique in the experience of all who have served here. Jim Rouse, the developer of Columbia, mentioned a number of times that CBF represents what he had hoped would happen in the new town of Columbia. What God has wrought in this place is truly wonderful, and the wonder of our "Camelot" is hard to realize fully if you haven't been in many other places.

The vision of "ebony and ivory" in an inter-faith center continues to be a worthy one, and one unlike any other of which I am aware. I thank God every day for the privilege of having joined you on the journey!

While the vision that led to our birth as a congregation was—and is—wonder-full, we are in a similarly exciting season right now. A number of very interesting "future stories" are beginning to surface, and we have some intriguing conversations before us. We are currently in the process of establishing a visioning team for our Spiritual Strategic Journey conversations, and there is an attachment with this *Laptop* by which you can suggest persons the Church Council might consider for such leadership.

And, **if you are not currently a member of CBF, I hope that our recently-revised By-Laws make such a possibility a compelling option for you.** Further guidance on membership options is also attached with this *Laptop*. While persons can ask for membership during any worship service, we have begun designating particular services twice a year as "Membership Days" so that you can know that you'll not be alone in your decision.

**The next Membership Day will be on June 9<sup>th</sup>.** (We changed the date due to various calendaring issues.) Maybe Homer's "final accolade" for CBF will be the nudge you need to cast your lot with this Pilgrim People!

Dave

P.S. Tomorrow (May 1) marks *Debbie's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary on our staff.* If you haven't yet expressed your gratitude and congratulations to her, there's still time!

