

The following article is located at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2016/october-web-exclusives/don-johanson-pastor-this-boy-loved.html>

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Don Johanson: The Pastor This Boy Loved

Lee Eclov | posted October 25, 2016



Rose Hill Evangelical Free Church is a mile down a gravel road in northeastern South Dakota, 12 miles from Langford, population 316. The church will be 110 years old next year. Rose Hill is my home church.

Our family arrived there in the late 1950s when I was 7. Maybe 50 to 60 people attended each Sunday. All were farmers except for the pastor and my dad, who was the business manager of a

cattle ranch. We drove 46 miles round-trip at least three times a week because it was the only evangelical church we could find.

When I was nine we got a new pastor fresh out of seminary. Don Johanson was single and lived in our drafty old parsonage a few miles from church. Though I didn't know it then, Pastor Johanson began to shape my understanding of ministry.

He told me once about a time in seminary when he was supposed to lead a prayer meeting at the church he served and only two ladies showed up, so he cancelled it. He told me that he regretted that they didn't pray anyway. After that, he said, every prayer meeting mattered, no matter how small the group. I never forgot that.

I recall asking my first hard Bible question after reading Mark 9:1. What did Jesus mean when he said, "Some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power." Pastor Johanson knew the answer.

Then there was the horrible farm accident where Adrian Fagerland was crushed to death. He was the church chairman, I think—a warm and godly man, father of four kids, my friends. It was a devastating blow to his family, our church, and our whole community. And our young Pastor Johanson had to do that funeral. It must have been so hard. I wonder if he had any mentor to call.

There was a terrible battle in those days. Two factions, and no one budged. Some 50 years later they still haven't. In other communities maybe people would have left the church, but there wasn't anywhere else to go. And dear, young Pastor Johanson had to deal with all that vinegar and venom.

I love my memory of Pastor Johanson at the Sunday school picnic at Clear Lake. He went swimming with all us kids, and we spent the afternoon trying to climb on him and knock him off his feet. I distinctly remember the red welts on his back from our scratches. And I loved him for it all.

Pastor Johanson died in 2005. He'd been a pastor for 39 years. I still remember the Sunday when he and Ella surprised me by showing up at a service in the church I now serve. I've been honored to have many wonderful visitors in our church over the years, but he was the only one I've introduced. And that was the only time I wept.



E.K. Bailey: The Faithful Preacher
H.B. Charles Jr.

I was a young preacher and a rookie pastor. My guest preacher asked me to take him to hear E.K. Bailey, who was also in town. I had heard of ...



Bill Swanger: The Lifelong Shepherd
Daniel Darling

When I think of the pastors who have influenced me as a leader—and a husband, a father, and a man—I am tempted ...



John Henry Corcoran: The 'Old-School' Mentor
Daniel Fusco

My life and ministry have been influenced by one pastor above all others. This man took ...



Bob Schmidgall: The Hand on My Shoulder
Steve Norman

When Pastor Bob Schmidgall put his hand on your shoulder to great you or on your head to pray for you, it was an ...



Greg Belser: The Expository Preacher
David Prince

Without a shadow of a doubt, Greg Belser is the pastor who has had the most influence on my ministry. I was a fairly ...



Leighton Ford: The Kingdom Seeker
Ken Shigematsu

When I first came to Tenth Avenue Church in Vancouver, BC in the summer of 1996, I was intimidated by the ...



**Anthony Jones:
The First Follower**
Mandy Smith

It's probably unconventional, but one of the pastors who has had the most influence on my ministry is one of my associate pastors ...



**Maurice Watson:
The Lover of God
and People**
Romell Williams

Without question, Maurice Watson, pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington, DC, has been the most ...