

Bruce Reynolds

David Crosby: This is David Crosby. I'm at Wells Church on the 9th of April, 2015. I'm with Bruce Reynolds and we are recording an interview as part of the Well's Oral History Project. Bruce do we have your permission to record this interview?

Bruce Reynolds: Yes, you do.

Crosby: Thank you very much. Well, huh, I see by your little biographical sheet that you have spent your entire professional career in planning and development first as an intern, when you got out of college? And then moving through the ranks?

Reynolds: Right. Uh, 35 years at Central Mississippi Planning and Development District. I retired about 3 years ago.

Crosby: Wow! So you have lived your whole life in Jackson?

Reynolds: Born and raised in Clinton, Mississippi, and but for time at Oxford at The University; back in Clinton. Try as they may they have not run us off yet.

Crosby: With respect to your connection to Wells Church, could you tell me when that began?

Reynolds: Wow! Have to really go back. We used to catch Keith Tonkel on the radio in the evening when I was driving and enjoyed his messages and that was probably back in the late '70s. We followed his voice to Wells Church. At the time he was splitting the pulpit between Jackson and also in Clinton. So back in the late '70s we visited the Clinton Church and also on Bailey Avenue where he is now at Wells. Probably about, let's see my daughter was born in 1982, so probably about 1980 or '81 we became members here at Wells and had been going here ever since.

Crosby: So his radio program was your first encounter with Keith?

Reynolds: It was! And it was just one of those bright spots on the radio dial as it were. Just this youthful pastor coming over the airwaves and he just really resonated. Not just with me but with my wife also. Enough to the point where we found out where he was and followed him here.

Crosby: Could you specify a little bit what aspects of his message you found most interesting, compelling?

Reynolds: Certainly, upbeat first of all. Non-condemning, welcoming and his just -- it's hard to put into words -- but his zest for life and living the good life and how it can return to you and to others. Be a blessing. Again, just a fresh voice.

Crosby: I see. Had you been a member of a church somewhere else?

Reynolds: I had, yeah, been. You know Wells is a very, very, very interesting and unique place. It normally used to kind of be a stopping off point or maybe a reuniting place for people who had had a bad experience with religion and their church in the past. You have to remember, like I said, in the late '70s, early '80s. A lot of condemnation had been preached and a lot of folks had left the church as a result of it. And back in the day, this was a place where we heard you could come in blue jeans. You know at the time, that was unheard of, you know. You know I came in my finest three-piece suit and guess what? There were people here in blue jeans but there were other people in suits also. So, a lot of people found this a safe harbor that they did not realize existed. It's funny we talk about how a lot of people snuck into the balcony after service started and then snuck away from the balcony so they wouldn't have to say anything to the preacher and after a couple of weeks they would sit up there the whole time and would say something to the preacher. A month or two later they're in the back row of the church and three or four years later they are getting married here and sitting on the front row. Because it is an innercity church a lot of our couples when they had children might move their church letter? to you know the suburbs so that their children could have maybe a more welcoming place to grow up because you know we are on the mean streets here. But we had a lot of couples who did stay and we raised our children, we collectively raised our children here. It's kind of interesting in that they have taken a lot of Wells with them to other places.

Crosby: How many children do you have?

Reynolds: Moni Reynolds is all five of our children. We were you know like everybody else, we were going to have three or four children. We had Moni, my little girl, and we decided she was handful enough to be all our four. She came up through Wells and was shaped and molded by the church and the congregation. We had rough times like everyone else. High school was not the most fun. College was a challenge but she graduated in four years and married and is faithful to a church where she is and we are watching her grow. Not just professionally but spiritually also. So much of the roots grow deep here at Wells.

Crosby: So you don't have any regrets about raising her in contact with the Wells community?

Reynolds: Oh absolutely not and you know at the time we struggled over it, too, because you know we have no bowling alley, we have no basketball courts; and none of her friends from Clinton, we traveled you know 18 miles one way to get here, were going here at the time. But she made friends from, you know, all over the Metro area here. You know, certainly we might have missed out on and she might have missed out on some other type of social activities, but again, what she got here, you know has been special. So, nah, no regrets.

Crosby: Ok. You suggested one of the differences that you received in Keith's approach to religion was a zest for living, kind of upbeat approach and you were more likely to encounter things like condemnation in some of the other churches that. Was that specifically with respect to social religious, sexual behaviors, the Ten Commandments kind of thing or was there some other dimension?

Reynolds: Yes, yes and yes to those that you mentioned. I think that, you know that when a lot of us were brought us it was "thou shalt not" rather than "thou shalt" you know, and the negative being emphasized rather than the positive. And you know religion can be a hard thing or it can be a good thing. And here at Wells it is a good thing. So it can be condemning or it can be freeing. We have chosen, with Keith's leadership, and others you know, to be more welcoming and more

freeing and to and you know it's all there in the Bible, too. You know the good stuff is there and you know that emphasis on that has really sewn the seed and grown us at this church.

Crosby: A lot of people would kind of divide things into conservative and liberal. Do you suppose those labels apply in this situation?

Reynolds: I tell you what. This is a weird church! Because when I started here, like I say, back in the day, you know the hippies went here. You know and, but that's not all! We have just the opposite, you know of the spectrum with deeply conservative folks also. And we range from conservative to liberal to white to black, you know, and that's the beauty of this is not about being conservative. It's not about people being liberals. It's not about being middle of the road. It's about Jesus you know. And it's about Christ and you know we can all relate to that. You don't have to be one or the other, you know and that's to me the beauty of this place...

Crosby: One of the things that Keith is remembered for in his own lifetime is signing the, I can't remember what it was called. It's the thing of Conviction I think?

Reynolds: The Letter of Conviction?

Crosby: Yeah, which was a response basically to some churches that were trying to keep black folks from entering their churches you know to worship on Sunday. That was probably before you became acquainted with Keith, wasn't it?

Reynolds: It was but you know we were, I was certainly aware of the movement and knew of that. I was in high school at the time when all that was going on, absolutely.

Crosby: And were you, you were aware of that?

Reynolds: Sure, well you know you are aware in Mississippi particularly in that day when you went to a church and you know you had a minority congregant you

know. Because it was either white or black and quite honestly as it is mostly today, too. You know we have changed a lot but a lot of it hasn't changed. You know the whole spectrum when you look at it. But then, again, the beauty of this place is when I walk in and everybody else, you know, think oh, we have some minority members or we have some white members or whatever. It's the Christlikeness being above that. I mean you know, that's not an issue. But back in the day, certainly it was much more of an issue but people gravitate here because not because; let me take that back, I gravitate here not because of that, not because of the activism but because of the welcomeness, the openness. Not that they would accept minorities but that they would accept me here! You know, I mean and ugh we and I include myself with everybody else here. You know black, white and everybody here and that's the beauty of it.

Crosby: Did friends or acquaintances ever question you about your affiliation with Wells in a negative kind of way?

Reynolds: You know it's been interesting. No, to answer your question. People knew that it was different. They knew that I was going to a church that I was different and a lot of it was because I was of the, you know, social activism but what was interesting, over the long haul, how they might have raised an eyebrow but again, like I say, I was never questioned, or, you know whatever. Like I say, an eyebrow might have been raised, now it is, oh yeah, Wells, that's the little church, you know, on Bailey, in the inner city. And it's kind of like, you know, good for yall! You are trying to do a good thing. So, what did we use to say? Yeah, things have mellowed.

Crosby: So you never felt your career as a public servant was threatened by ah?

Reynolds: Actually, it was enhanced. I will tell you and it has been enhanced on two levels. One is everything professionally I have done was preceded here at Wells. It's been very interesting. I use to be a total introvert. I was never a member of a committee and, you know, became a member of a committee. I watched and saw how things were handled and became chairman of a committee and another one. Soon thereafter, professionally would be the same thing you know and as I grew, you know, professionally it was initially here at Wells that I

learned how to do that. But, trying to get back to your original question; the other way it helped me professionally is, I dealt with politics an awful lot. I dealt with seven counties and 33 municipalities and all the local elected officials in there. Where it actually helped me was when Bennie Thompson asked, "Bruce you go to Wells?" You know I had an entrance into his door then. I wasn't looking for it and I wasn't expecting it but with the minority elected officials, they do and it surprised me because it was like, you know, I'm not doing anything different. You know, I mean I'm just going to church but it was kind of instant credibility with particularly with our minority elected officials. It helped out an awful lot and I'm still friends with them today. But, it never was, that I know of, I don't think it was, a detriment to the other local elected officials either.

Crosby: So you think it gave you an ability to bridge different constituencies in planning us all and getting people to agree to this?

Reynolds: Yeah, it and working with locals, you have to have their trust. No matter what you do, be it planning, economic development, helping them write a grant or whatever and it's just this kind of instant cred; instant credibility.

Crosby: What kinds of activities did you first get involved with? I mean you came because of the message.

Reynolds: Yes.

Crosby: And you stayed because of the sense of welcome and then you began to get involved in other things.

Reynolds: Yeah, it started off with the Administrative Board which is you know, I didn't know anything about the Methodist Church. I was raised Presbyterian and married a Baptist and so here we are going to a Methodist Church but when we are in Oxford, visiting our daughter, we go to First Presbyterian Church up there. So you know we are all over the road but the Methodist Church has the Administrative Board. In most churches it's not that large of a committee but at Wells it is a very large committee that kind of decides what the money will be spent. We have a council which decides, you know, what we will be doing and they asked me to be

on the board, on the Administrative Board. And you know I was aghast. I didn't know what to do and thought it would be good to do it and then you saw the inner workings and you know the missions that we have here. And the more I learned, you know, the more I started tapping into. And you know that just kind of evolved into a lot of mission work that we have done.

Crosby: So you became associated with the Administrative side, the Administrative Board?

Reynolds: Right.

Crosby: Rather than the Council of Ministries? But one of them led you back to the other in a sense?

Reynolds: Yeah, and the Council would bring to the Board ideas and we would not really ratify but in effect so doing, we had to come up with the money to pay for it and so say, "Yes, this is a good idea". But I have always been kind of on the Administrative and kind of "doing" side than the great "free thinkers" side of it there.

Crosby: How do you pay for things at Wells?

Reynolds: Awh, it's a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful thing. Keith preaches sermon after sermon about tithing and giving and pledging and I am Totally Lying to you here! One of his, one of Keith's saying is never preach a sermon on giving. It is a miraculous thing and I learned this early through my Board work. We had a gentleman who would say, "If it is God's Will, it will get paid for." And it would! We don't have pledge cards here. We don't sign up that we are going to give X number of dollars. We are not a rich church. We really are not. We are a rather modest, if not meeker, you know income across the board. But when we had our huge building campaign, because this is an old church. Back in the '80s, we knew it was going to cost a lot of money and it costs a lot more than that. But every penny of it was taken care of. I have found out that if there is something that is needed, and in God's will, it will be paid for. I'm not sure how. It is a miraculous thing. It's one of those cool miracles. You know, let God and He will. And if we

have something, you know we do a budget. We abide by that budget. And you know we might get a little over or under but at the end of the year, you know, we do that. But if something comes up; I'm sitting here looking at the pulpit, all one has to do is stand up there and say I have been led or not even that. I feel there is a need for and fill in the blank, you know. And someone or some bodies will hear and God will nudge, a check will be written and whatever "it" is will be taken care of. It has always been like that and as long as we, you know, continue in God's will, we will continue to.

Crosby: So spontaneous philanthropy?

Reynolds: Absolutely, absolutely and again this is from a church that doesn't have a lot of money but we will get it done. Another thing, we are blessed, you know, a friend of mine and many have told me, you can't out give God. The church can't out give God either. We are very; when we, we are very strict about when we do our budget that we spend as little as possible on the administrative end and God bless the folks that work here but. Our goal, you know, is our money that is brought in through tithes and offerings is for as much as possible for mission work. Be it, you know, Bailey Avenue or, you know, Tlalamac, Mexico, or Managua, Nicaragua, you know. It is just amazing to see how this little church can affect as many folks as it can, you know, financially, by trying to do the right thing.

Crosby: Is there any particular ministry that you have felt drawn to?

Reynolds: Absolutely, again back in the day, and this was in the early '80s, Malcolm White talked about, you know; interesting story. Malcolm was getting married. Keith married them. Malcolm goes to Keith and says how much do I owe you for doing our wedding? Keith says I do not accept compensations for, you know, weddings. Malcolm said no, I'm going to pay you for it and they went back and forth and Keith wasn't going to accept it. So, Malcolm comes back and says, ok, this is going to be my payment to you. It's going to be a gift. It's going to be a, well we will do a celebration, a festival and it will be for neighborhood folks and that's going to be my gift to you since you want accept it. And that was the initiation and the genesis of Wells Fest. We got a goofy little committee together and started very, very, very humbly and what we decided it would be

would be “Wells Methodist Church present to the Community” and free admission, you know, free rides and all this stuff. And it was great. The first one we did, you know, we all had fun and it actually kind of came off. And somebody brought me a bag of money and I think it was about \$900 or maybe \$1,000. I was like, what’s this? And they said we made some money, you know off the drinks and it was like what do we do with this you know? So I had a \$1,000 and took it home and put it in my freezer that night because I didn’t know what to do with it. Then the next Sunday morning gave it to the treasurer minus about \$250 for carrying fees! No, I gave it all to them. And we realized that, you know, it was a fundraiser. So the first part, and I will admit this, it goes to the renovation of the church but that was because we didn’t know what to do with it and since then I guess the 31 years, however, we have decided that it will go to a certain recipient. Actually, we do requests for proposals and select a recipient and now they’re getting about; we raise about \$60,000 and every bit of that money goes from Wells to whomever that recipient is. We keep none of it and that’s kind of our tithe to the community and as a result of that God keeps blessing us, you know. So, that was my initial one mission if you will. I kind of stumbled into that. I didn’t know what was going on and since then Galloway Church, I’m sorry, Galloway Elementary School, which is across the street, we have adopted them. And that has become one of my missions and I say my missions, one of the churches missions that I have bought into. We do a book buddy program where we put an adult with a child and they help them to learn to read for about an hour a week and we help them with science projects and we have achievement awards program where we feed all of the parents and bring the kids in and give them awards and accolades and clap for them; not just being the best but we also have the most improved award because so many of the kids have improved drastically but will never be that A student, you know, and so we try to recognize them. Galloway has been a big mission of this church and we are trying desperately, you know to help these kids out because it’s tough. It is, you know. I thought I knew what tough was, you know but I have learned how little these kids have; little resources they bring to bare.

Crosby: Galloway is the local.

Reynolds: I’m sorry. It is the elementary school. Pre-K through fifth grade and it’s immediately across the street from us and has been there forever. We help the

school with teacher appreciation and give them gift cards and this sort of thing. Just trying to help out where we can there, yeah.

Crosby: So this is as if a business were adopting a school? The church adopts the school?

Reynolds: Right and they have a couple of their adopters also. The Medical Mall. I know there are a couple more, I just can't name them right now but we and they consider each other partners. We really do and just try to help them wherever we can.

Crosby: And you mentioned some place in Mexico?

Reynolds: Yeah.

Crosby: Thalami?

Reynolds: Tlalamac Mexico. We started, I have no idea. I would say 20 years ago on helping out with the medial mission and it's in Central Mexico about 3 hours outside of Mexico City in the mountains. When we started the mission, the little medical mission was nothing and we were not the only team. There were teams from North Carolina and other places around the United States. We would go down there every year and every year there would be something, you know, another room. We would help, you know, with the construction until it was completed, a little two story, medical and dental. And then we would help work on the parsonage for the Methodist preacher down and it got to the point where we felt it and were advised not to go because it was unsafe. So we have not been able to go down there in a number of years but we have been making enquires and trying to sneak back down there and do that. Since then I think we've done 3 trips to Nicaragua, again three hours outside of Managua helping with medical clinics down there dispensing medical care, dispensing medication and helping out like that and also rather than sending folks we have established a contact in Haiti and are assisting them with some local like economic development type things to try to booster the locals economy there and to help them out but we are right at the point at looking at doing some boots on the ground mission trips because we love the

relationships that we get from these folks when we get down there. It's not a cheap thing. So I feel like money is better spent otherwise but the love we have for those folks in Tlalamac we miss. And we want to get back and see them. We want to establish this type of relationship somewhere else so we are kind of working on that right now and hoping within the year to be able to do a foreign mission trip again.

Crosby: I'd like to clarify something about you say a medical mission. That there is a clinic. Is this something that is staffed regularly?

Reynolds: Right.

Crosby: And you go down there to try to improve it? Things like that?

Reynolds: Yeah.

Crosby: Do you have a concern for the year round staffing of the place?

Reynolds: Very good question. When it started there wasn't even a clinic. So what we were first trying to do is while some folks were, you know, doing brick and mortar; we had doctors and a dentist with us and the rudimentary building we were in, you know, hundreds of clients would come in and be treated for either medical or dental medicines given to them. As the building came up we got a very part time doctor who would come there every once and a while and as it got a little bit better a dentist would come in like once a week and now my understanding, like it's been a number of years, but it was fully staffed by a doctor and a dentist would come in from time to time. It evolved from nothing to a pretty nice little thing there.

Crosby: When they told you it was unsafe to continue, what were the concerns about?

Reynolds: The main concern was because the drug cartel and the kidnapping and ransoming. That's the main thing.

Crosby: I see.

Reynolds: It started with State Department too. They literally said, you know, we consider this unsafe and so.

Crosby: And if you get kidnapped we're not going to help!

Reynolds: Yeah, and the thing is what they didn't realize if we get kidnapped they are not going to get very much from any of us.

Crosby: Yeah but clearly not a very good situation.

Reynolds: Yeah. I was talking to Keith Ferguson yesterday and he would probably second everything you said about the getting to know the people and his particular relationship

Reynolds: Oh absolutely.

Crosby: So it sounds like it's meant a lot to the church here.

Reynolds: It has and when I first started going down there, I'm not a doctor or a dentist, you know not a construction foreman either and I felt like kind of, you know, what am I doing down here? You know I don't mind spending the money. It's kind of like a vacation, you know, in a primitive form. But when you come back you do realize that the relations that, you know, you forged down there and next year you go down and you know Jiyell or any number of folks and they know you and you miss them. It is a relational thing and something we miss and we want to start again.

Crosby: A large part, I'm guessing a large part of the congregation here, doesn't actually live in this neighborhood.

Reynolds: No.

Crosby: But some do and the relationships among the drive-ins and the walk-ins; I'd be curious about how that works.

Reynolds: An interesting situation, you know, back in the day, I've used that word, but back in the day, this was, you know, the center of Jackson. This was one of the neat places to live. Wells was a strictly a white church at the time. When, you know, it had its decline, when Keith came here, depending on who you are talking to, there were only 13 congregants or 50. It depends on who you are talking to but it was the old dry bones sort of thing. He breathed some breath back into it and the church, I mean the area and the church was in a transitional stage of white flight taking place and you know minorities moving in and Keith's presence was the anchor then. You know I don't care what he says about it, he was the anchor and yes he was known for, you know, signing the letter and for other things. My feeling is that the Holy Spirit brought him here and thus brought some other folks. Early on it was still mainly a white church. Even with, you know back in the day, when he was a champion of civil rights, we still didn't have a lot of minority members then. Quite honestly only recently have some of the neighborhood folks started coming in. You know it's an interesting thing that we know that a number of our local folks get in trouble with their congregants when they came from across the street or their church because they feel like well because you need to be going, you know, to an all-black church. That works both ways. It's difficult for them to, you know, leave their roots and come here, too. One of our other missions is every Tuesday morning, others probably have mentioned this, we have what we use to call our food pantry, and now we call Our Neighborhood Ministries. We give out a modicum of, you know, food and bread and we generally have 100 people from the neighborhood who come in to get food and Keith gives a little mini-sermon beforehand and we sing a song and that has brought more folks here than anything else from the local communities. I'm starting to see some of my good friends on Tuesday morning, you know, coming in for some bread who are now sitting up there in the balcony, moving to the back of the church, just as we had you know. That has, you know, we have a number of middle class minority folks, but now we are starting to get some of our neighborhood folks in here and it is a good thing. It really is.

Crosby: You know it's not as if the African Americans who live in this community are unchurched. There is obviously the African Methodist Episcopal Church has been a hugely successful congregation for African Americans ever since the 1790's.

Reynolds: Absolutely.

Crosby: Has the church ever thought about partnering with an AME church in the area and doing some things together?

Reynolds: If so I am not aware of it. Keith is very familiar with the pastors in this area. They are very covetous of their flock. They are very covetous of their flock! I'm betting it wouldn't fly and I might be totally wrong but you know Keith is such a, you know we speak of him as God, and he's not, we know that. He's not a cult leader either. He is a very, very special person that is able to reach out and do. He has made efforts, you know, to bring in local population and you know it's like I say in God's time it is happening. It really is. You know this church, it probably would be, you know, twice the membership if we were not located here. I have good friends who say I would love to go there but my husband will not drive into that neighborhood. It's unsafe and he won't let me do that and what is so interesting is our neighbors take care of us here. We don't have problems. We might have had two incidences that I know of like a broken into and maybe a window broken and one of them, our neighbors, caught the guy and I think had their foot on his on his neck and called the police. They know who we are and we know who they are. We take care of each other. It's a symbiotic relationship. Another mission we have, you know, is the gardens around here. The landscaping and that again is our gift to the community and it's a beautiful little place to wonder around in and we have, you know, the edible garden over here to where we try growing stuff. It's there and you come and pick it and you take it home and eat it or can it or whatever and this is kind of our extended congregation who might not be in church but they are a part of this church.

Crosby: It's my one contribution to Wells Church. I provide pine straw for Loy's compulsive need to mulch.

Reynolds: There you go. That's a huge thing because Loy Moncrief, I mean, he spends his life doing this. Landscaping, yeah.

Crosby: Well I've got so much pine straw in my front yard, I'm grateful to have somebody get rid of it for me. I had something else I was going to ask but it's slipped my mind at the moment. Oh, the question of safety.

Reynolds: Yeah.

Crosby: People being afraid to come down into this neighborhood. That's always struck me as being so over blown. We were in a situation I taught at Alcorn for 26 years. We lived right off campus so our girls took the school bus to Port Gibson or on to the Port Gibson public schools. Starting, our oldest was in the third and then all three of them graduated from Port Gibson High School. The white people in Port Gibson when they would hear that our kids were in the public schools were just, awh aren't you afraid? And they were treated so well. I mean, you know, they had a few rough spots to navigate but you have that in any school and now they are in their 40s and I'm sure they wouldn't trade that experience for anything in the world. White folks tend to be really fearful.

Reynolds: No question.

Crosby: Well, I'm sure there are questions I haven't asked that should have been. Can you, do you have any questions you would like to ask me first of all about this oral history project?

Reynolds: Yeah, how will it, what will the format of it be? How will it be distributed?

Crosby: Well the, because it is part of this larger oral history program for the University of Southern Mississippi, everything will be archived there at Southern. The participants will all get an electronic copy of their interviews. There is a committee that, James Martin and my daughter Sarah Campbell are part of. I think they are planning a program sometime this spring.

Reynolds: It's in good hands.

Crosby: So I'm not sure if it will be like a roundtable for the people who have been interviewed and maybe show some clips that were done and show some video, too, but ultimately I think it's to try to help the congregation explore its origins and how they relate to what's going on now and what they might be moving toward in the future. Like planning.

Reynolds: Yeah, exactly. Well I tell you what is humbling is when they come and ask me to do this because I'm supposed to be this institutional knowledge around here. Gracious, I am getting old! You know I always use to look up to everybody else for the history of it and now I am it, you know. It makes me nervous!

Crosby: Well, you know, life happens.

Reynolds: It does, it does and it does beat the alternative.

Crosby: Are there issues, you think, that are facing Wells Church that it either is not addressing or needs to address more vigorously as it faces the future?

Reynolds: Absolutely and no question, you know, and Keith Tonkel, what is his age now? 115, I think! Keith is, what, turning 80, I believe. Yeah, I think that's right and certainly, is there life after Keith Tonkel at Wells? That's the question of too many folks that is unspoken. One of the committees I am on is the PPR, or whatever, it is the staffing committee, you know, where we have to deal with personnel, the bad stuff but we have been very, very active over the last three years when Keith, you know, came down with his third round of cancer and was not able to preach, and you know, what do we do about this? What do we do about that? Through the grace of God we have put on board, you know, my goodness, a team second to none. The former head pastor of Calvary Church is our assistant pastor. You know we have a principal of Jackson Public School. None are better than her, retired to be on our team here. We have the editor, former editor of the Clarion-Ledger who is working here and then, you know, our minister of music; where did he, not Joliette, but, you know, Julliard. Julliard. They have called him Mr. Julliard. He is our minister of music. And by the way we have a pastor who has

been the longest running Methodist pastor here in Mississippi probably or the United States for the past, you know, 60 years almost and this team was just brought on board and they are doing new and exciting things. We are rethinking everything and it's one of those, if it ain't broke, break it. You know just because we have done something in the past, doesn't mean that we will continue to do it. Let's do new and exciting things and I hope that, and probably Bettye Quinn spoke to the revival that started in this church back in the, I'm not sure, in the '20s or '30s and in my brain I see a revival happening here. Maybe not the same type but a resurrection if you will. Here it is April and we are seeing a resurrection in Easter but we are seeing a resurrection outside as the trees burst open and I honestly believe, you know, that God will do even a new thing here at Wells. The team that we have, the energy that I'm feeling, a synergy is starting to happen. I'm excited about it. I'm hoping for great things. You know this is God's thing. If he wants it to happen it will and if not, that's ok, too. Because it's His Will.

Crosby: Well, it's quite unusual especially in a Methodist Church to have a minister for so long in place.

Reynolds: Well, first of all, nobody wanted him. Back in the day, when Keith started here, when the time came, nobody wanted Wells. Keith has remained here. He built it up and it is a unique church as I spoke of earlier. I think that the Methodist Church realizes that and we have been blessed that they have left him here. It is totally abnormal for this to happen. It is a phenomenal thing for them to allow this to happen but it is a very unique situation. But we are prepared, you know, we are prepared for when it is time for Keith to move on or whatever, you know, we are in place. We are good to go but we want him here as long as he will stay. I guarantee you.

Crosby: So is there a mechanism in place for replacing a minister?

Reynolds: Absolutely, and you know, once again I told you I was raised Presbyterian. I've learned a lot. But the way it happens is every year the Bishop, the head of the Methodist Church, makes appointments and this happens throughout Mississippi and the United States, wherever. And, at whatever point, we get a new minister and it will be through them with consultation to us. We

know that. We have been in contact with them about it. We know that they know that this is a different situation. A unique situation. We know, you know, that God will work to send us just the right person that, you know, that other Keith Tonkel who is out there.

Crosby: Well, I've seen some university presidents replaced by the Board of Trustees of the Institutions of Higher Learning and that can be a pretty messy procedure.

Reynolds: Certainly it can, and you know every year within the Methodist Church this happens. You know quite honestly the Bishop can do whatever he wishes. The good thing is he does it through consultation. We know good will come from.

Crosby: How large an area does the Bishop?

Reynolds: State, state of Mississippi.

Crosby: Mississippi?

Reynolds: That is correct.

Crosby: That's interesting.

Reynolds: It is and that's something, you know, a church will say, you know, we want to keep our pastor or we want another pastor. They actually ask him or you know, it's up to you if you want to send us someone. It's kind of a 3-prong way and you know we have always said please let us have our pastor back next year and they have been very gracious in doing that.

Crosby: Well it's interesting to hear that there is active consideration of how to institutionalize good things about Wells. Well Bruce this has been enlightening and I appreciate the time you put in on this and your forthrightness in answering these questions.

Reynolds: I appreciate you doing this without notes. Man that's great! The fact is you would ask me a question and at the end I was trying to remember what the question was. You are sitting here doing it without notes, so you are doing it well. I appreciate your help with us.

Crosby: Well thank you very much and thank you again for the interview.

Reynolds: Thanks.

THE END.