

# Joseph Parker: Leading urban ministry in a complex setting

September 7, 2016

**Joseph Parker** will celebrate 24 years as senior pastor of David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Austin on Sept. 29. For 10 years prior to that, the native of Birmingham, Ala., who began his career as an attorney, was an associate minister/pastor at the congregation.

## Background

- *How did you come to faith in Christ?*

I grew up in the home of a Christian pastor and wife, who taught me about salvation and Jesus; I accepted Jesus at the age of 7 years in 1959.

- *Where were you educated, and what degrees did you receive?*

Birmingham, Ala., public schools

Morehouse College, bachelor of arts in political science/pre-law

The University of Georgia at Athens, master of public administration

The University of Texas at Austin, doctor of jurisprudence

Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary, master of divinity

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, doctor of ministry with emphasis on urban ministry in a complex setting

## Ministry/church

- *Why do you feel called into ministry?*

It was a long, thoughtful, meditative and prayerful journey that ultimately led to a compelling, “can-no-longer-run” submission. This compulsion has stayed with me over 34 years.

- *What is your favorite aspect of ministry? Why?*

Teaching, which I believe is my area of giftedness, and the joyful opportunity to pour into people spiritually as they take their journey of Christian discipleship.

- *What one aspect of congregational life would you like to change?*

I would like to change the attitudes of congregational members about their personal discipleship development.

- *Name the three most significant challenges and/or influences facing your congregation.*

In my urban context of Austin, (1) the geographical location of our congregation’s physical site, (2) an “out-flux” to and growth in suburban areas rather than within the city limits and the attendant challenges of white gentrification in Austin’s urban core—particularly surrounding our current facility and (3) internal “balancing” of interpersonal relationships and ministry to five generations while continuing to attract younger generations.

## **About Joseph**

- *Who were/are your mentors, and how did/do they influence you?*

My father, *Joseph C. Parker Sr.*, a Christian/Baptist pastor, with whom I had a close relationship, who was my pastor until I was 24 years; and in my further ministry development, *E.K. Bailey*, who was my pastor for three

years and mentor for years afterwards until his death, who “softened” me up to begin seriously considering my call to ministry as I experienced a “new” approach to ministry in the black church; and *James Obey Sr.*, my “father-in-the-ministry” and pastoral predecessor, under whom I accepted my call and served under for 10 years before I succeeded him upon his death. In the law, attorney *Tom Long* was my mentor who trained me in being a civil litigator.

- *What did you learn on the job you wish you learned in seminary?*

More about how to develop congregation members to be Christian disciples.

- *What is your favorite Bible verse or passage? Why?*

[Proverbs 17:17](#), because I value friendship and brotherhood and have had good relationships in that regard.

- *Who is your favorite Bible character (other than Jesus)? Why?*

Joshua, because my “ascendance” to the pastorate is similar to Joshua’s succession relative to Moses.

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