

Chaplain Robby Jernigan

Robby grew up in a middle-class family in Columbus, Georgia. The son of James E. and Marianne (Tedder) Jernigan, Robby was exposed to public service from an early age. His grandfather, Joe W. Tedder, was a motorcycle cop and later the city marshal of Columbus/Muscogee County. When Robby was a young adult, his father was elected to the city council of the Consolidated Government of Columbus, Georgia and later became Mayor of Columbus. By virtue of elected office, James E. Jernigan was head of the Columbus Police and Fire Departments.

Throughout the years, Robby carried on the Jernigan family tradition of public service. He would often help people who were experiencing a wide variety of major and minor problems as he encountered them along life's way. Once, when a violent storm hit town and power was knocked out, he went to the nearest intersection to assist in traffic control. He often stopped at motor vehicle accidents to see if there was something he could do to help. While in college at Auburn University, Robby happened upon a rescue/recovery effort for a person presumed to have drowned. Robby worked along side the volunteer firefighters until the body was recovered.

In a rather bizarre experience, Robby was standing outside a mall entrance in Columbus when two young children came up to him and said, "Help mister! A man has our mama and he has a gun!" It was Saturday morning and Robby was still in his camouflage deer hunting clothes. His deer rifle was on the front seat of his car parked close by. He told the kids to go inside the mall and call police. Robby armed himself and carefully surveyed the situation. He began hearing gun shots, and bullets were flying by. He took cover behind some cars and prayerfully continued trying to assist. The event ended with another courageous yet maybe less cautious "Good Samaritan" being shot in the abdomen by the robber. Robby rendered first aid to the victim until the police and the ambulance crew arrived.

In 1974 Robby's spiritual life took a major leap forward. He had surrendered his life to Christ at a church revival service in 1964 at age ten. Yet in his adolescent years and into his early college years, he strayed from the faith. But in September of 1974 Robby was once again walking the narrow path of a fully surrendered life. Now working in a regional tax and accounting firm in Columbus, Robby felt the call to ministry. Strongly influenced by the ministries of Morningside Baptist Church, the Auburn Baptist Student Union, and especially by the ministry of Evangel Temple A/G Church in Columbus, Robby was growing in Christ by leaps and bounds. He attended one year of undergraduate Bible college in Lakeland, FL and then it was on to the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield, MO.

Robby and his wife, Betty (Jeter) Jernigan of Waxahachie, TX, married in May of 1982, and they became A/G missionaries one year later. Their first term of service was in Alaska, where Robby's primary ministry was as a traveling Bible College teacher. He also served as a volunteer chaplain and search & rescue pilot for the Civil Air Patrol, helping find lost aircraft and the souls aboard. Later the Jernigans were transferred to Arizona where Robby served as one of the administrators of a Native American Bible College in Phoenix. In the late 1980s, Robby and Betty moved to Southwest Missouri and continued in ministry/missionary service.

In 2005 Robby and Betty had an experience that would dramatically change the course of their lives and ministry. A friend of theirs committed suicide. As a Pentecostal minister of the

Gospel, Robby felt guilty for not doing more to help his friend. The Bible says that the enemy of our souls, the devil, is on a mission to destroy as many people as he can. (John 10:10) And in this situation the Jernigans were facing, their spiritual enemy was working over-time on Robby. For three days following the death of his friend, Robby could not eat or sleep. At 2:00 AM Robby woke Betty up and exclaimed, "I need help!" The crescendo of his cry was unmistakable. For the next 45 minutes, Betty, with strength and gentleness, ministered to her grieving husband. She sang and prayed with him and for him.

After a time of intense, spiritual warfare by his loving wife, Robby began to see light at the end of the dark tunnel. He emerged from his pit with this phrase, "I will NOT be defeated in Jesus' Name!" For him, it was not as much a positive confession as it was a desperate prayer. In the midst of his crisis, Robby felt he had to admit, to himself and to God, that he had not done all he could to help his troubled friend. It was in that time that Robby made a promise. "Never again will I have to ask, have I done all I could to help a hurting soul." Shortly after these events, Robby went to his local fire department and asked if they needed a chaplain. His motive was to try and prevent tragedies like this in his community; and when they did occur, to provide the care and comfort that Betty had provided him in his hour of need.

After years of training and by following the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ, Robby and Betty continue to serve as career U. S. Missionaries with the Assemblies of God. He is also as a nationally registered emergency medical technician, an EMS Instructor, and a certified firefighter in his community. These are all volunteer areas of service. The theme that pulls them all together is ministry in the name of our Lord.

Robby and Betty continue to serve as nationally appointed U.S. Missionaries with the Assemblies of God. Their duties are to recruit, train, encourage and help place chaplains in emergency services departments (fire, law enforcement, EMS and emergency dispatch) across the country.