

# Rev. Dr. Russ Dean

Russ is the co-pastor of Park Road Baptist Church with his wife, Amy Jacks Dean.

Together, they and their congregation have made a significant commitment to social action and contributing to the Charlotte community. Park Road Baptist provides office space for Mecklenburg Ministries and Crisis Assistance Ministries and was a temporary site for a Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry. They participate in Room in the Inn here in Charlotte and international mission trips to places like Cuba

Russ has also:

- Served on the Board of Directors, Mecklenburg Ministries, 2006-2012
- Served on the Executive Board, North Carolina Council of Churches, 2008-2012
- Served on the Board of Directors, Counseling Center at Charlotte, 2004-2012; Board President 2006
- Served on the Board of Directors, North Carolina Alliance of Baptists, 2004-2007; Board President 2006
- Frequent media appearances, including the Charlotte Observer and WFAE's Charlotte Talks.

Russ Dean served as Mecklenburg Ministries Board member for six years between 2006 and 2012. Russ served as Board President for two of those years and participated in the Sermon Exchange program co-sponsored with Crossroads Charlotte. Russ was chairman of Mecklenburg Ministries' Mission/Vision Task Force Committee, going through a careful process to evaluate and craft the currently used Mission and Vision statements.

As President of Mecklenburg Ministries, Russ instituted the now traditional devotion that opens the meeting, in which a board member discusses their faith journey and/or beliefs. Russ did this to demonstrate that learning about the faiths of others strengthens rather than detracts from our own faith, truly demonstrating the power of interfaith dialogue and connection. Russ modeled this belief by presenting the first devotion, and soon after Rodney shared his own devotion with the board.

Russ was one of the first participants in Souls of White Folk program and was involved in all the subsequent projects over the past 7 years. Souls coordinator Anne VanNewkirk described Russ' and Rodney's involvement: "Russ and Rodney each participated in the first round of SWF in 2006, Russ as a white clergy dialogue group participant, and Rodney as a black clergy advisor. They both helped to establish the "clergy lunch" program and participated in the first interfaith clergy Habitat build. As participants together in the first "all souls" retreat, they joined with other Christian clergy who were interested in reaching out to more conservative leaders and congregations, an effort the participants named "Spectrum." Since that time, Rodney and Russ have continued to be "go to" folks for dismantling racism work, including the pilot session of a mixed-race clergy seminar held during the summer of 2012. The small group of participants in that pilot was instrumental in bringing Tim Wise to Charlotte in January, 2013. Russ and

Rodney each helped launch a book study of Wise's book "White Like Me" with their respective congregations. Russ and Rodney embody the purpose of Soul to Soul: overcoming inter-racial distrust. They continually lead by example."

Rodney and Russ helped plan a march on Palm Sunday, March 24 to commemorate the Bloody Sunday protest of the Civil Rights movement and raise awareness of current civil rights challenges threatening local citizens.

In addition to their public work, Russ and Rodney have modeled interfaith and interracial relationships together. At several Mecklenburg Ministries events they publically discussed how their friendship began. Soon after they became acquainted, Russ approached Rodney, realizing that although he had African-American acquaintances, he did not have any close black friends he could talk with on a deeper, more intimate level.

Rodney agreed to be that friend. Russ and Rodney have been working together to build bridges and advance racial and interfaith understanding ever since. As Dianne English of Community Building Initiative noted, "Russ Dean and Rodney Sadler are men of deep faith whose joyful spirits, intellect, creativity and presence invite all of us to work with them to create 'the beloved community.'" "