

## **Dale Mullennix Remarks – 2012 Breakfast**

**Thank you very much for this gracious recognition. This is one of those occasions when you are supposed to thank a lot of people for making you who you are, but good lord, I don't want to saddle anyone I care about with that responsibility. Instead, let me say how grateful I am to Mecklenburg Ministries for who it is; to my colleagues and board at the Urban Ministry Center for who they are, and most of all I am grateful to my wife Jane and my children, Aaron and Amanda for being here and being who they are in my life.**

**Meck Min's value and vision are well known after 25 years of faithful, obedient service to this community. Its leadership in building bridges between races and faiths is well documented and is something for which we all should be grateful and to which we all should continue to be committed.**

**What you may not be familiar with is Meck Min's other service which has so profoundly impacted my own life. You see it was way back in 1990 as a somewhat young pastor at Myers Park Baptist Church I was preparing to go to a Meck Min. meeting at Little Rock AME Church when I decided to call a new colleague down the street at Myers Park Presbyterian to see if they wanted to grab a bite to eat before the meeting. The colleague's name was Jane Summey. Little did I anticipate that over dinner that night I would fall madly in love with Jane. I tried every way I could think of to convince her that going on to Meck Min. was a bad idea and we should continue our evening somewhere "less spiritual". As has been the case ever since, she won out and we went to the meeting; well actually we went to half of the meeting. I will always owe Meck Min a debt of gratitude for that evening.**

**Do you remember a few years ago when the idea of writing 6 word autobiographies was made popular on NPR? I think there was a book about the same thing. I thought it would be a good thing for our team leaders to try on a retreat a few years ago. When I suggested we do this I thought it would be thought provoking and self revealing, but maybe nearly impossible to accomplish. When I sat down to write my own 6 word memoir, to my surprise the 6 words "So many chances, why me, Lord?" somehow made there way from heart to pen to paper in a moment of honest self recognition and gratitude.**

**I have been blessed with so many "chances" in my life on both personal and professional levels. And since you have put me in this uncomfortable spot this morning, I am going to claim this time as one more of those chances.**

**This room is full of leaders; leaders in the faith, business and public communities. The first job of a leader, I've been told, is to define reality; to tell the truth about the way things are, good and bad. As we know, right now in our city, state and nation there is fierce competition to define reality. Quite frankly, much of it lacks credibility. Much of it is**

dependent on condemnation of others. Much of it is driven by self preservation and self justification.

So how do we, leaders who claim to want to build bridges and community, what chance do we have to have to claim credibility in defining reality as we see it? What chance do we have to be believed? I believe we earn our credibility to say what the community is by where we choose to spend our time and resources. As faith leaders we earn our credibility, not so much in the pulpit or in the board room or media, but in hospital rooms, counseling sessions, and sitting by deathbeds. For others of us, we earn our credibility to say what is by spending time at the shelters, soup kitchens, backalleys, and jails. We all earn our credibility by being where the need, the hurt, and human suffering are greatest. By being with the ones no one else wants to be with.

There are leaders in this community who make a whole lot more money than we do, who travel in social circles we will never be a part of. But when it comes to defining reality that matters, you have no peers!

How do I know this? I know it because of what I have done, but also because of the times I haven't done what I should have done, and because the places I have gone, and because of the places I didn't go that I should have gone. You with me? Knowing who you are makes all the difference in being a leader who knows what is. You see, I have always been given more light than I have been willing to follow---and so have you.

But here is the good news. "So many chances". You can join me or not in tacking on the why me Lord part. Say it with me. So many chances. What chance are you going to take today? Amen.