**My Call to Wilmington**

As I finished my senior year at Nazarene Theological Seminary, the pressure began to build on all the seminarians as to what would be their next step in the ministry. In those days, more than 50% of the students would not receive a call to pastor an organized church, and at least 25% of those who were called ended up accepting a call to a small church that could not financially support them. Bi-vocational reality began to confront all the students—most of whom had college and seminary loans and several who had one or two children in their family to support.

While I was willing to do that if this was what God directed, I hoped, as did most of the students, that there would be a chance to work full-time in ministry. Two months before graduation I received a request to interview at what would have been likely the best opportunity any seminarian would have had that year. It was a “mid-sized church”, which averaged 175 in their worship services and had finances that were exceptional as well as significant leadership in the church. The District and the superintendent would have been a pleasure to be able to serve. However, as I prayed, my heart was just “cold” toward the opportunity. I can’t tell you why, I just knew that this church was not the one I should pursue. One of the hardest things I have done in the ministry was to call the district Superintendent and tell him that I had to deny the request—and to do so without any other choice that I knew about! That superintendent over the next 15 years gave me several requests to interview in his district, each of which I did not feel I could pursue. I am afraid he always thought that he was the reason why I declined—but it was not. I always admired him, and his devotion to Christ, and wished I could have served with him.

A month before graduation, I received a request to let my name be considered at the Wilmington church. I knew immediately that this was where God was leading me, and both Jan and I were excited. The previous church was a beautiful place where people vacationed, Wilmington is in the heart of the harbor of Los Angeles and is known for its drug and crime problems. The previous church had money and leadership, the Wilmington church had a third of the attendance of the former church, little money, or leadership. Yet we thrilled sensing God’s presence…and did he ever bless that decision. Many young adults came to Christ, and many of their parents and relatives came to join us to support them! It turned out to be one of the happiest times in our ministry. My suggestion is for you not to look at human factors but listen to the Holy Spirit as He surely will guide you.