

THE LIFE RECORD OF DONALD G. HUNT

Delivered by Victor Knowles, July 8, 2005, at the funeral of Donald G. Hunt
Christ's Church at River Road, Ottumwa, Iowa

I am deeply humbled and greatly honored to have been asked by the family to prepare and read the life record and deliver a eulogy for one such as Donald G. Hunt.

Referring to the title of his autobiography *My Cup Runneth Over* (published in the year 2000), Brother Hunt disclosed, "I almost entitled it 'Born to Live, Love, and Labor.'" I like that alliteration. Brother Hunt, you shall have your way! And so I give you now "The Life, Loves, and Labors of Donald G. Hunt."

I. HIS LIFE - The Bible says, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die..." (Ecclesiastes 3:1,2). For **Donald G. Hunt**, the time to be born came in the spring of 1922, April 26 to be exact, born the fourth son and the fifth child of **R O and Ida (Sommers) Hunt**. He was born in the midst of trials for a brother, **Joseph**, age 3, died the year before he was born and a sister, **Marie**, age 7, died a few months after he was born. He grew up knowing only his two older brothers, **Gail and Kenneth**, both of whom preceded him in death.

He was raised a country boy on his parent's farm just outside Cincinnati, Iowa. He was a child of the Great Depression era. He worked hard on the farm but also enjoyed school and sports. By age 12 he knew he wanted to be a farmer. He was converted to Christ at 14 during a revival meeting. Following graduation from high school in 1939 (he was class salutatorian) he continued to help his father farm and also taught in the local church. One spring day while working in the field, a song came to his mind "Have Thine Own Way, Lord." Then and there he fully surrendered his life to Christ, abandoned his plans to farm, made the decision to preach, preaching his first sermon at Exline, Iowa on May 3, 1942. He enrolled at Ozark Bible College (then in Bentonville, Arkansas) the same year, earning the distinction of becoming the schools first male graduate in 1946. Seth Wilson, then dean at OBC, testified that Donald, Burton Barber and James McMorro were the most diligent students he ever had. He also studied under George Mark Elliott and Edsil Dale at Cincinnati Bible Seminary in Ohio, earning a post-graduate degree in 1947.

II. HIS LOVES - He had three great loves: his family, the family of God (the church), and the wonderful world of nature.

Family - On July 26, 1948 he was united in marriage to **Margaret Word** in Portland, Oregon. To this happy union were born three sons: **Donald Gerald II**, April 21, 1950 (born on his Grandpa Word's birthday!); **Ronald James**, August 15, 1951; and **Richard Allen**, August 7, 1968. In his autobiography he has many words of high praise for each member of his family. He was a devoted, loving, kind, and thoughtful husband and father. In time he would become a father-in-law, grandfather, and great-grandfather, treating each new person who entered his family circle with the same consideration, gentleness and respect.

The family of God, the church – When he sang, “I Love Thy Church, O God” he meant it. Everything he did revolved around the church – locally, nationally, and eventually internationally.

He was ordained to the ministry in 1942 by his home congregation in Cincinnati, one of seven or eight “Timothies” to go forth from that church. Pre-college ministries included Exline and Udell in Iowa.

College student ministries included Hiwasse, Arkansas; Urich, Jenkins, Moberly, and Amoret in Missouri; Picher, Oklahoma; Rock, Kansas; and Staunton, Indiana.

Post-college ministries (all in Iowa) included Ottumwa (a church plant), Orleans, Cincinnati, Des Moines (a church plant), Davenport (his third and final church plant), and and finally back to Ottumwa. His longest ministries were 15 years at Orleans and 17 ½ years at Davenport. Since 1988 he enjoyed an associate ministry role with the River Road church. At the time of his death he was teaching and preaching four times each Sunday in Bible school, church, a nursing home, and leading a Bible study for apartment dwellers.

In addition to local church work, Brother Hunt taught countless classes to young people in Christian service camps, conducted hundreds of revival meetings across the land, and spoke on hundreds of preaching rallies through the nation – including what he liked to call “large scale” rallies that he launched. They include the Cincinnati Rally (later Centerville Rally) in Iowa; the January Gathering (later February Gathering) in Ottumwa; the Troutdale Rally (later Holgate Rally) in Portland, Oregon; the Rushville Rally (later Midwest Gathering) in Indiana (now in Ohio); and a series of Coastal Gatherings, mainly in California. All of these were designed to strengthen and edify the church. Knowing the future of the church is its youth he also served as a trustee for Sharon Bluffs Bible Camp.

Brother Hunt’s love for the church extended beyond Iowa and the borders of the United States. In addition to leading six teaching tours to Bible lands in the Middle East, he also preached in Puerto Rico, Jamaica (twice), England, India, Ukraine, and Belarus.

The wonderful world of nature – Brother Hunt’s third love was the beauty of God’s creation. Trips across the country to preach became occasions to enjoy with his family as together they saw the mighty works of God. “From the redwood forest to the gulf-stream waters” – this land was made for Donald G., and his family!

III. HIS LABORS - Haven’t I already mentioned them? What we have already considered would be more work than any normal minister even dreams to do. But Brother Hunt was possessed with the thought: “Work, for the night is coming when man’s work is done.” His extended labors would have to include at least three categories: the teacher’s classroom, the editor’s office, and the writer’s desk.

The teacher’s classroom - In 1947 he, along Barber and McMorrow, founded Midwestern School of Evangelism. He spent 58 years in the classroom, teaching nearly 50 courses in seven different fields. Thousands of students from across the nation came to

“sit at the feet” of this master teacher and have gone forth throughout the U.S. and nearly 50 countries remembering the schools’ motto: “Freely ye have received, freely give.”

The editor’s office - One year earlier, 1946, the same three men launched the *Voice of Evangelism*, a national, then-weekly now-monthly gospel paper. Brother Hunt edited the *Voice* for 59 ½ years, to my knowledge the longest editorship of any journal published in the Restoration Movement. Thousands became acquainted with him through this vehicle, challenged to live a greater life of consecration. He also edited the informative school bulletin, *Evangelism from the Heart of America*, for 30 years.

The writer’s desk - He wrote the first of his 30-plus books when he was only 19 – an unpublished manuscript called “Man’s Obligations”, released in 1950 as *Simple, Stimulating Studies in Christian Stewardship*. His two best-known books are *The Unfolded Plan of God* and *52 Simple, Stimulating Studies*. He also wrote 30-plus biblical tracts and chart studies. His works have been disseminated far and wide and have been translated into at least seven languages.

Even for those who lead the fullest of lives imaginable, life on earth does not go on forever. The Bible says, “There is a time to die” and for Donald G. Hunt that “appointed time” came July 1, at 7:02 P.M. (MST), while he was unloading his luggage in Colorado Springs, Colorado, preparing to preach on yet another rally the next day. His prepared message was on the theme “Forgiveness.”

The Bible says, “There is a time to mourn.” Mourning his absence (but celebrating his presence with the Lord) are his wife, **Margaret**, of Ottumwa; his sons, **Donald II** (and wife **Vikki**) of Centerville; **Ronald** (and wife **Monica**), of Petaluma, California; **Richard** (and wife **Beth**), of Salem, Oregon; nine grandchildren, **Matt** (and wife **Wini**) of Warrensburg, Missouri; **Martha** (and husband **Brian Felton**), of Centerville; **Monte** (and wife **Amy**) of Joplin, Missouri; **Anthony** (and wife **Siana**) of Honolulu, Hawaii; **Lisa** (and husband **Aris Pologeorgis**) of Petaluma, California; **Angela** (and husband **Joel Stewart**) of Petaluma, California, and **Justin, Joseph** and **Andrew** of Salem, Oregon; ten great-grandchildren, **Hailey, Lacy, Jadon, Garon, Tate, Aukina, Ariana, Theo, Alexa** and **Silas**, a host of friends, former students, and fellow laborers.

The Bible says, “There is a time to keep silent.” Let us pause for a moment of silence, each of us remembering Brother Hunt in our own way, but all of us thanking God for his life, his loves, and his labors.

“Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them’” (Revelation 14:13).