

University of Mississippi

eGrove

---

University of Mississippi News

---

3-28-2015

## UM Communications Specialist Leads Oxford's First COGIC Church

Edwin B. Smith

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews>

---

### Recommended Citation

Smith, Edwin B., "UM Communications Specialist Leads Oxford's First COGIC Church" (2015). *University of Mississippi News*. 5517.

<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews/5517>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Mississippi News by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact [egrove@olemiss.edu](mailto:egrove@olemiss.edu).

## UM Communications Specialist Leads Oxford's First COGIC Church

More than 30 years in the making, New Freedom began as a campus ministry

MARCH 28, 2015 BY EDWIN SMITH

### FaTvLiErCoSMPrSt



UM graduates Edwin and Fannie Smith pastor the New Freedom Church of God in Christ in Oxford.

As a young journalism student transferring to the University of Mississippi in the fall of 1977, I dreamed of one day being a professional writer and a full-time minister of the gospel. Almost 40 years later, I've been blessed to achieve my dream.

As a professional writer, I am a UM communications specialist. While I enjoy my "day job" and it pays the bills, serving as founder and pastor of New Freedom Church of God in Christ is my true calling and passion.

Our congregation celebrated its 10th anniversary Sunday (March 15) by officially dedicating the building we purchased two years ago in the Northern Mississippi Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction. While other ministers have led similar, but defunct, COGIC assemblies in Lafayette County, New Freedom is the denomination's first to be established here and recognized at the state level. In that sense, my wife, Fannie, the other charter members and I are making history.

The church was officially launched as New Freedom Family Ministries in March 2005. We co-occupied a storefront at 809 College Hill Road. Our growing congregation remained there until purchasing its present location at 206 Highway 30 East in December 2012.

"My husband and I are just so thankful that the Lord has blessed us to endure and make it to this point," Fannie Smith said. "Truly, it has taken several years of time, prayer, finances, patience and hard work in bringing this vision to reality."

As I think about it, starting churches is somewhat a Smith family tradition. My paternal grandparents, the late Eddie Lee and Lucy Sales Smith, began the first Church of God in Christ in Holly Springs more than 80 years ago. That building was a dance hall that they transformed into a sanctuary. Christ Temple (formerly Willow Springs) COGIC is their legacy. So am I.

I also had two uncles on my father's side of the family who started successful churches in Memphis. My wife was a founding member of the Pilgrim Rest COGIC in Oakland.

Even before we started New Freedom, Fannie and I led the University of Mississippi COGIC Fellowship from 1984 to 1994. Again, it was the denomination's first campus ministry in the Oxford area. I also briefly pastored Kelly Chapel COGIC in Robinsonville in 1994 before accepting a faculty position at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

When we returned to Mississippi in April 2002, it was expressly for the purpose of starting a church. All we had to work with was our vision, our willingness to sacrifice for the sake of others and our faith.

Many told us we were out of our minds. At that time, neither of us had jobs. We lived between our mothers' family homes in Oakland and Holly Springs. It took awhile before I was rehired as a writer in UM Communications and she became a teacher in the Holly Springs Primary School. After at least one failed attempt, we decided to delay our own vision and just continue to attend and work within the church in Holly Springs.

Still, we firmly believed that at some point, we would resume and complete our God-given assignment: to successfully establish a COGIC church in Oxford. We placed an ad in the Oxford Eagle, rented a meeting room at the Days Inn once a week for three months and began having services there.

Ten years later, here we are. None of this has come easy. We've experienced both support and

### Follow us on social



### Campus Briefs

#### Students Learn 'Real Politics' in Washington, D.C., Winter Session

OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates'

[Read the story ...](#)

#### More Posts from this Category

### Thank You To Our Donors

#### Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

[Read the story ...](#)

#### More Posts from this Category

### Ole Miss In the News

#### Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve's

opposition. Members have come and gone. Financially, we have had both famines and feasts. Each of us has had health issues. But without doubt, I can say that if we had it to do all over again, we wouldn't change a thing.

Our services at New Freedom include prayer and Bible band at 7 p.m. Wednesdays, Sunday school at 9:30 a.m. and morning worship at 11. Everyone is welcome to attend any and all services. For more information about the ministry, call 662-380-5019, email us at [nffm2005@gmail.com](mailto:nffm2005@gmail.com) or visit our Facebook page.

At some point, I'm planning to retire from my day job at Ole Miss. Farther down the road, I'll also probably hand off New Freedom to someone younger and better prepared to lead the congregation to its next level. But I'll never stop serving the Lord. And I'll always be thankful He chose my wife and me to help establish this work in Oxford.

[Read the story ...](#)

More Posts from this Category

 FILED UNDER: [OLE MISS NEWS BLOG](#)

[Return to top of page](#)

Copyright © 2023 · [The University of Mississippi](#)