

# Worthy of DOUBLE HONOR

## Who can help when retired pastors struggle financially?

by MARK KELLY

IF YOU DON'T KNOW Bob Kendrick personally, you know a retired pastor very much like him — someone who labored wholeheartedly for decades as pastor of small congregations that could provide only meager salaries. Such pastors usually reach retirement age with only a small Social Security check and little or nothing in savings.

That was where Bob and Lois, his wife, found themselves in 2017 at ages 82 and 80, respectively. After 42 years of serving as a pastor of small churches in eastern Oklahoma and as director of missions for two associations, the Kendricks retired, only to jump into the church construction ministry of the state's Baptist Builders group. Many times they dug into their own pockets to support the group financially.

A heart attack in 2017 forced Bob's second retirement. But he looks back on four decades of ministry with no regrets, even though he had followed God's call away from a financially promising career.

"Bob and Lois disciplined believers in their homes and at the church building," says Aaron Meraz, director of Mission:Dignity®, the benevolence ministry established by Southern Baptists in 1918 with the creation of their Annuity Board (now Guidestone Financial Resources). "They visited the sick in the hospital. They ministered to unbelievers in the community, praying with farmers, waiters, and waitresses. They gave all

their strength to the work of the ministry, loving every soul and loving every minute of it."

Bob himself says, "It was worth all I gave up."

But where was the "double honor" the Bible says is due to those who have worked hard at preaching and teaching?

### Serving Selflessly

Aaron has known Bob during most of the retired pastor's four decades of service.

Aaron was the "preacher boy" on a youth evangelism team sent to conduct a four-day revival meeting at the Kendricks' church, First Baptist in Savanna. Bob and Lois hosted them for dinner one evening. "Bob had a larger-than-life, yet humble personality; and Lois was a loving, caring soul, always mindful of the needs of her guests. The night was full of fun, fellowship, and prayer over the revival meeting. It was truly refreshing. And during those four days, Bob and Lois were teaching me, even though I was the preacher."

Out of that new friendship, Aaron had a first-hand view of the challenges and hardships of serving as pastor of a small congregation.

"I remember how hard they worked. They struggled," Aaron says. "These retirees really are soldiers of the cross and heroes of the faith. When I look at the condition they are in, it's an honor to come alongside them and help them to continue to do the ministry they are in. I'm very thankful for

"The elders who are good leaders are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17).



them. They truly are an extraordinary group." Since taking the helm at

Mission:Dignity, Aaron has come to know many more retired pastors or their widows who worked hard for many years, yet have almost nothing to show for it financially — and struggle to get by each month.

### Finishing Well

Through Mission:Dignity, Southern Baptist ministers, workers, and widows age 65 and older who qualify for financial assistance are eligible to receive between \$225 and \$600 per month; an annual Christmas check; and assistance for emergencies such as medical bills, eyeglasses, hearing aids, and house repair.

Aaron loves the fact that in 2020, Mission:Dignity was able to provide "double honor" to more than 1,800 retirees or their widows.

"It's biblical. We are called to take care of widows, orphans, and our elders," he says. "Seeing the difference it makes in their lives makes it all the better."

For their part, Mission:Dignity donors love two things about the ministry, Aaron adds.

"The donors love these retired ministers and their widows and the fact that 100% of what they give goes

directly to them. That's unheard of in a lot of ministries today."

Bob asks: "What would

retired preachers do without Mission:Dignity? Where would we go after giving all we have? I just want to give everything I am before I leave this earth. Mission:Dignity helps me focus on finishing well rather than on finances." ☺

MARK KELLY is a career Southern Baptist journalist who lives in Marietta, Georgia.

### MISSION:DIGNITY

We are grateful for the many dedicated pastors and their spouses, like Bob Kendrick and his wife, Lois (who passed away in 2019). Whether you are a retired Southern Baptist minister, worker, or the widow of one who needs financial assistance or someone who would like to help out, you can learn more by visiting [missiondignity.org](http://missiondignity.org) or calling 877-888-9409.

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