

November 16, 2023

Courtyard by Marriott





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Program

Welcome Pastor Kermit Rowe

Opening Prayer Pastor Andy Shroyer

Sponsor Recognition Mr. Bruce Stapleton

Video

Breakfast Music by St. James

Video

Acknowledge Dignitaries Mr. Jay Weygandt

Tribute to Mayor Copeland Mr. Daniel Blevins

Address by Mayor-Elect Mr. Rob Rue

Video

Prayer of Thanksgiving Pastors Jeremy Hudson & Aaron Roy

Prayer of Blessings Pastors Ernest Brown & Marty Dennis

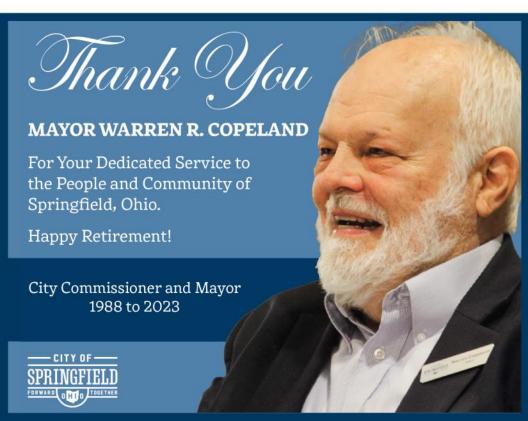
Closing Remarks Pastor Eli Williams

Closing Prayer Pastor Cozette Snead

Champion City Sponsor



Springfield became known as "**The Champion City,**" a reference to the Champion Farm Equipment brand, manufactured by the Warder, Bushnell & Glessner Company. In 1902 this company was absorbed into International Harvester.





National Road Sponsors





Known as the main street of America, the National Road was authorized by Congress in 1806. The National Road began in Cumberland, Maryland in 1811 extending an earlier route from Baltimore. Construction in Ohio began in 1825 and reached Springfield in 1838.



City of Roses name comes from the fact that, in 1919, Springfield was home to 33 greenhouses that produced more roses than any other city in the world.



























Attorney Mark F. Roberts





Warren Copeland Formational Vignettes

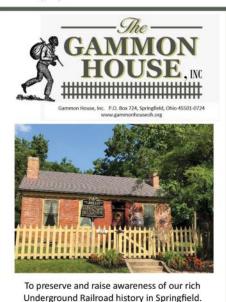


Surviving The Delta

We were staying at the home of a beautician who was a leader of the local movement in Hollendale, Miss. She was already housing the summer civil rights worker who had worked alongside us all day. We were all sleeping on her screened-in porch on cots. After the lights were turned off, the summer worker started talking about some of the close calls he had had, including a time when he was run off a country dirt road by a pickup truck with a gun rack above the rear window, confederate flags and a bumper sticker that said, "All White N____ Go Home Or Die." After a time, he went to sleep; I never did. Every noise outside made me worry that they were coming to get us. I have always wondered if he was intentionally or accidentally hazing us. I guess this part of the experience was precisely why I wanted to come, to prove to myself that I had the guts to do it. It was less fun and more threatening than I had expected.

The Movement Came to MacMurray

"Which side are you on, boy? Which side are you on?" The words came from the deeply moving and overwhelmingly powerful voices of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Freedom Singers (Charles Neblett, Cordell Reagon, Rutha Harris and Bernice Johnson). I wanted very much to be on their side. The Civil Rights movement first became real to me at the Chapel of MacMurray College on the evening of May 14, 1963. I can still remember them challenging us with their stories of amazing courage and significant sacrifice by those in the movement, especially the young. Finally, we made a big circle and sang "We Shall Overcome." What a strikingly naïve yet immensely powerful experience that was. We students present there that night decided to form a campus chapter of the SNCC to support efforts to end segregation in the South.



For more information call 937-244-2754

Catching MLK's Dream Leads To Changing Career Focus

Later in 1963, Clara and I and other students were moved by the accounts and pictures of the dogs and water hoses of Birmingham, Ala. That summer we saw Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech on television. The fact that ministers were the leaders of the movement led me to start rethinking my vocational future. The movement may have sung that they were not going to let Bull Connor turn them around, but they sure helped turn me around. I was also finding that my intellectual interests began to shift. I was good at science, especially book science, but I found lab science less and less engaging. The courses I liked the most were sociology courses taught by Professor Robert Lysinsky. Indeed, I had about decided to switch to a sociology major when Dr. Lysinsky announced that he was leaving MacMurray to become a dean elsewhere. Then I figured out that I only needed a chemistry course each semester in order to complete my chemistry major, so I stayed with that. That freed me to take whatever I wanted for my other courses. This academic decision was combined with a growing sense that as a minister I could participate in changing America.

Born Again by a 'Public Faith'

Wednesday night was church night. So I found myself in a little Baptist church in Hollendale, Miss., worshipping the God who was freeing the people. Half of the songs were freedom songs and half were old gospel songs. Many of the old gospel songs took on freedom meaning I had never thought about before. As I sat there in the pew at that church, I felt deep in my soul a faith that had been developing within me confirmed. It was not a faith about my own personal salvation. It was a faith about the deepest meaning of acting to create a more just community. These folks I shared services with did not have the education of us outsiders and yet they knew in their hearts and their minds that their world was unjust, and more importantly were convinced that they could not change that. More importantly, they were willing to risk everything they had to do that. Here was a crystal-clear example of what I have some to call "public faith." I have since said that in that pew in that service I was born again as a Christian. Not as what is usually meant, I know. However, I refuse to believe that any other

religious experience in my life has been more powerful for me than what I felt that night in that little church in Hollandale, Miss. After the service was over, as we met each other and stood around talking, the young man who had been leading the singing asked me if I had been in the demonstrations that had been going on in Chicago. He was surprised when I said no, which forced me to think. I had made such a big deal, mostly in my own mind, about giving up a week or so of my life to be a part of the movement here in Mississippi but had done relatively little right where I lived.



Tribute to Retired Mayor Warren Copeland

Pre- 60's

1961

Beginning

Grew up in the Quad Cities in northwestern Illinois: Active in church, sports and debate.

College

Went for college to become a high school science teacher and basketball coach. First generation college student for his family at MacMurray College, Jacksonville, III.



1977

1977

Wittenberg

Came to Wittenberg University as a faculty member of the religion department, teaching social ethics.

Ph.D in Ethics & Society

Graduated from University of Chicago Divinity School with a M.A. and PhD in ethics and society.

77-80's

1988

SPRINGFIELD

Springfield Home

Bought a home on West Wittenberg Blvd., prioritizing living on the city's "south side"

Springfield City Commission

Appointed to City of Springfield Commission in 1988 and was elected to the Commission in 1989. Re-elected in 1993, 1997, and 2001.

2018

2009

Medal of Honor

Just recently, Warren received the Medal Of Honor from Wittenberg, its highest faculty honor.

Doing Justice in Our Cities

His ethical reflections on his time in Springfield city government, titled "Doing Justice in Our Cities: Lessons in Public Policy from America's Heartland," was published.

Timeline to a Life of Service

1965

1966

Married Clara

Met Clara Coolman at MacMurray College and got married June 12, 1965, two weeks after they graduated.

Ministry Begins

Ministered in Mississippi after graduation, working in groups who followed the civil rights movement set forth by Martin Luther King and accentuated by Robert Kennedy.

1973-77

1968

Illinois Conference of Churches

Worked for the Illinois Conference of Churches in Springfield, III

M. Div Degree

Graduated from Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis with a M.Div. degree.

1990-

1995

Mayor of Springfield

Served as mayor from 1990-94, and then again 1998 until present, and has announced his retirement at the end of this term. In 2003, was the first elected mayor in Springfield since 1914.

Distinguished Teaching Award

Received the highest award for teaching at Wittenberg, the Alumni Association's Distinguished Teaching Award in 1995.

2002

1997

Wray Chair At Wittenberg

Named to the Wray Chair in the Humanities in 2002. Active on several faculty committees.

Updating the Dream

Was editor and primary author of "Updating the Dream," a major study of Springfield

Warren Copeland

Springfield's Longest Serving Mayor

By Kermit Rowe

Urban Light Ministries Board Member

Of the many distinguished awards soon-to-be-retired
Springfield Mayor Warren Copeland has received and the innumerable educational and political accomplishments on his resume, one thing stands out above the rest for him.

"The best thing we did was to buy a home on the south side of Springfield," he once said.

To know Warren and his wife of 58 years, Clara Coolman Copeland, is to know why he would say such a thing. Their entire marriage, and the accomplishments they have together achieved through nearly six decades of their "two shall become one" relationship, have centered around and sprung from the consistency of and dedication to the civil rights movement and helping the underserved.

"That said who we were," said Clara earlier this month of their decision to live on the south side of town. "We wanted to live there because we cared about the people on the south side. When Kroger closed their store on the south side and created a food desert, it was a food desert for us, too. I still won't shop there!

"Warren was always proud to represent the south side," she continued. "He always represented the whole city, but there has always been a sense of love and support from the African American community. They appreciated that we talked the talk and walked the walk."

Clara struggled to manage a smile when she said that. You see, we were talking in the lobby of the Springfield Regional Medical Center, where Warren had been since Oct. 16 after contracting sepsis.



He turned 80 in September, already having announced his intention to retire as mayor, and a month later he found himself struggling through a significant medical challenge.



And of course, Clara was right there every step of that struggle – up to the point where she would only grant an interview if she could stay close to Warren. Kinda like their dedication to eradicating racism and making our society a better place to live - a war that may never be completely over. But there's no doubt they have won many battles, keeping that much-needed voice in city political and higher educational circles by their dogged presence.

It has been a six-decade journey together.

"We cared about the same things," she said. "He was more working class than me. We dated for the last three years of college (at MacMurray State in Illinois) and then got married two weeks after graduation.

"He just cares about people," she added. "He is committed to trying to make life better for people."

Their love story started with a chance meeting.

"We met each other the very first day," said Clara. "(His college roommate) introduced us at a student gathering (for incoming freshmen). But I thought I was in love with another guy in California at that time.

"The next summer at a party for new students that we both were volunteering at, we saw each other again," she continued. "We were both camp counselors. We went to a movie and a football game. We did something every night. He asked me to the opening chapel. I went, and we just connected. We cared about the same things."

Clara spoke about how experiences they had during a trip down south stoked the fires of their civil rights activities and their faith (see Warren's vignettes elsewhere in this program). In fact, he went down south to Mississippi with the embers of justice for minorities already smoldering.

"They needed white ministers in Mississippi because the press wouldn't listen to black preachers," she recalled. "His mom was very scared (for him to go), and his dad begged him not to go for his mother's sake. He always talks about how he was being born again (referring to the purpose in his heart to help African Americans endure their strife and improve their life)."



Clara taught kindergarten in the Indianapolis school system early in their marriage, which led to a career of early childhood teaching wherever they went.

"I always say that I grew up as a kindergarten teacher," she said, mustering another smile. "And Warren would say that I have a 'south side' chip on my shoulder."



They even became so attached to one student named Angel that they adopted her. They have two children of their own: Steve Copeland, who lives in Springfield, and Karen Willhite, who resides in Hilliard. They also have seven grandchildren. It has been a memorable and loving ride.

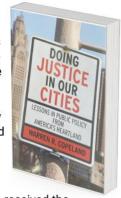
"We grew up together," Clara said fondly. "He was the intellectual side and I was the practical side. But he was also practical. We rarely disagreed."

It was an impressive intellectual pursuit, to say the least. Influenced greatly by the movements headed by Martin Luther King and accentuated by Robert Kennedy, Warren graduated from Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis in 1968 with a M.Div. degree. He worked for the Illinois Conference of Churches in Springfield, Ill., for four years and graduated from University of Chicago Divinity School in 1977 with M.A. and PhD degrees in ethics and society. That same year, he came to Wittenberg University as a faculty member of the religion department, teaching social ethics.



"He taught a racism class, which was something he really loved," she said. "One of the kids asked him once, 'Why is an old white man teaching about racism?' And he answered him, 'It's kind of our problem, don't you think?'"

Indeed, and a problem the Copelands have built their home, their love for each other, and their lives around fighting through education and service. That has produced an impressive impact on those who they have taught and led. Warren has authored two books on religious social ethics and was co-editor for a third. He received the highest award for teaching at Wittenberg, the Alumni Association's Distinguished Teaching Award in 1995. In 2002, he was named to the Wray Chair in the Humanities in 2002. He was also active on several faculty committees and headed the Hagen Center, which assisted every Wittenberg student in integrating in the local community through service.





Just recently, Warren received the Medal Of Honor from Wittenberg, its highest honor.

Politically, he was appointed to the City of Springfield Commission in 1988 and was elected to the Commission in 1989. He was re-elected in 1993, 1997, and 2001. He served as mayor from 1990-94, and then again in 1998 until present. In 2003, he became the first elected mayor in Springfield since 1914 – making him one of the longest running mayors in Ohio.

And all of this is anchored in their faith.

"Mine is a more active faith," Clara said. "I just do because I believe love is the bottom line. And so does Warren. We have a love for the Haitian community, for the Jewish community, for the Muslim community, for the Sikh community, for the African American community, for all communities. We are one community, and God loves us all."

Added Clara, "We are a pair."



Rob Rue

Springfield's New Mayor Reflects on the Future

By Kermit Rowe Urban Light Ministries Board Member

It's been a quarter century since the job has been open. But don't think for a minute that the opening caught new

Springfield Mayor Elect Rob Rue by surprise. He has been preparing for the opportunity to replace retiring Warren Copeland for many years.

"He's been a part of the city for over 35 years. And, you know, I think that we both desire the same things," said Rob. "I've enjoyed working with Warren. We both have a desire to see Springfield succeed and both have desired to learn from each other.

"He was the first one I sought out when I decided I wanted to be involved with the city," he continued. "I went and met with him and he put me on a committee. And that was kind of my first step in city government."

Rob was elected to the City Commission in 2017, and then re-elected in 2020. A year ago, in October of 2022, Rob was appointed vice mayor, replacing retiring Commissioner Joyce Chilton. All of this has served as great preparation to step into the big shoes of a man who has held the position for a total of 29 years.

"We definitely have different philosophies and politics, but when it comes to making decisions, I do want the best for Springfield. And I think he saw that while he got to work with me," said Rob. "I'd say Warren would probably say that he was surprised how well we worked together, how well we got along as fellow commissioners and as a commissioner (working with the) mayor."

That chemistry set the stage for some on-the-job training.

"I wanted to be vice mayor because I wanted to learn what I could in that seat next to Warren and be a part of what he could teach me," Rob said. "It was my intention when I got involved in city politics in 2017 that I would run for this seat one day."

Rob ran unopposed. So yes, this first Mayor's Breakfast is a great way of honoring Warren for his 40 years of service to Springfield, being elected to the City Commission in 1983. But it is also ushering in a new era of city politics with Rob.

"It's humbling to be honored with one of the longest-running mayors in the state of Ohio," Rob said. "But at the same time, we're honoring me for something I haven't done yet, so we're really not honoring me.

"It's more like I'm going to be talking about what our hope is for the city in my joint leadership with the commission and helping lead the commission to accomplish the goals and objectives of the city. Representing the city is such an honor for me."



In Springfield, the mayor is the president/chairman of the City Commission, which represents the city in city functions and operates much like an elected board of directors. But the mayor has the same vote as all the other commissioners. That forces members to work together, even though their politics might not be the same.

"So people have asked me, 'Well, what's your vision for the city?" he said. "I say, 'My vision has been put together with the Commission that I've been a part of for six years.' So it would be my job as mayor to represent the goals and objectives of the Commission, to preside over the meetings, and to make sure that the city is represented well in those meetings."

Prior to 2017 when he was elected commissioner, Rob had held "a lot of board positions," learning from each one. But watching Warren up close, he saw a man he admired. "I watched a man who would listen to everyone," he said. "I watched a man who wasn't controversial in his leadership. So he would very much have ears of compassion when it came to folks. And he wanted to make sure people were heard.

"He'd been there for such a long time, he kind of knew that whole structure (of city government) like the back of his hand and had been through different city managers and different things in the city. So a lot of it was muscle memory for Warren. So I was just kind of watching that, to be honest. I assumed if you're involved with something that long (you are going to be very good at it)."

So Rob comes into the office of mayor with some special goals.

"I want to appreciate Warren's involvement in the city," he said. "And I want to say at the same time, we are at a time of need for change. This leadership position is something that I take seriously, and I think Warren did too, of course. But I'll speak from my perspective on how I'd want to look forward.

"I'm looking forward to representing the city with passion, with energy, with zeal," he added. "I know our leadership styles will be different. But like I said, I want to be able to always have that air of compassion. And at the same time to make sure that the agenda of the commission, as far as what our goals and objectives are, would be what would be best for Springfield. And in doing that, we have to have open ears to the citizens of Springfield representing the entire community. And that takes effort, that takes intentionality, especially."

Rob is aware that Warren's career identity is a leader who always kept the needs and voice of Springfield's "south side" heard in political circles. And he is committed to keeping it that way.

"I've been born and raised on the north side of Springfield, so it's been my goal since I've even ran for office was to make sure that folks would know that it's my desire to know the entire community, represent the entire community," he said. "I was raised in a community that had racial struggles. And there needs to be an ear to the entire community and not just move the agenda of one side of the community. The south, the northeast, and the west need to have good representation, and I want to make sure that continues to happen."

He has other goals as well. Like keeping Springfield's young talent in the city with great job opportunities and continued economic development.

"I want to make sure we're a flow of opportunity for folks to have jobs here.," he said. "At the same point, we have a housing shortage. I want to make sure that we're making decisions to grow Springfield so we can grow our tax base, so we can take care of our citizens. All that's important."

So his plan is simple.

"I want to continue to represent, but as I do that there are resets in the commission that need to happen. And so I intend on evening things that weren't maybe done five years ago. I don't intend on restoring anything other than we're going to tighten things up a little bit."

As for the long term, the future - he has thoughts on that as well.

"There's a quote that I love that says, 'He who has the most hope, has the most influence,'
"He said. "I think as you're involved with government and you're inundated with people's
opinions and facts and a myriad of circumstances and things that happen, it's sometimes
hard to hold on to hope when you're just being smacked with reality. But my goal would
be to maintain and grow and hope for Springfield.

"I know that, honestly, the best is yet to come for Springfield." he continued. "Our days of success are not past us. And I really do believe that we need to focus to continue to work together as a commission, as a team, and make decisions that are best for Springfield. And I will keep repeating that because the more the team of commissioners understand that we need to make positive decisions for Springfield, the more successful we'll be." He's hopeful this will happen.

"You know, we want to grow. We want to change. And if you look at all the development downtown that's happening, you can see that," he said. "We were able to do some development things or utilize some funds to redo our downtown and also invest in businesses and invest in opportunities for the citizens of Springfield. And we can get better at that. We need to do better at that. We need to do better at investing in minority businesses. We need to do better at making sure that we're communicating with the entire community."

Rob thinks Springfield is up to those challenges, which excites him for the city's future. "I've been excited to be a part of this," he said. "I've been preparing to be mayor. People know what I'm about. People know what I want to be and will represent this city and lead this city along with the commission. I've been working just as hard, if not harder, as an unopposed candidate.

"People say, 'Well, you're a politician.' I was like, 'Well, yes, I'm in a political role, but I have no desire to be anywhere else. And this is not a steppingstone for me as far as getting involved with politics. I want to be a good representative and I enjoy the nonpartisan role of this position as well, because I basically think what's good for Springfield is good for all of us."





SPRINGFIELD TOGETHER







Springfielders have a lot for which to be grateful.

O' give thanks unto the Lord... Psalm 136:1



