

# **ALIVE IN THE SPIRIT**

## **Essays on the First Fifty Years of The Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church**

### **AN INTERPRETIVE HISTORY OF THE FIRST TEN YEARS**

By Courtland Smith\*

Who was it who said many years ago that nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come? Could this concept help explain how Binkley Memorial Baptist Church has grown in ten years from a membership of forty to one over three hundred fifty? Could this help explain its influence on over four hundred Binkley alumni who are now moving into positions of increasing importance in business, government, education, the professions and in community life across the United States and in over twenty other countries? We would suggest that the story of this Church is to be told in terms of facilities and people, but most of all, in terms of an idea.

Contrary to the impression some people may have had, this Church did not come into existence as the result of any conflict within any existing Baptist organization; rather it was started as an extension project of the Yates Baptist Association with the full cooperation and support of the University Baptist Church. In March of 1957, Dr. Fred W. Ellis was asked to join the Church Extension Committee of the Yates Association because the Glen Lennox area of Chapel Hill had been selected as the appropriate location of a new Baptist Church. By the end of August Dr. Ellis reported to the Committee that an option had been secured upon a plot of two acres located on the 15-501 By-pass, east of Chapel Hill. He recommended that an additional acre be purchased, bringing the total cost of the land to \$7000, with a down payment of \$1000, half of which had been pledged by the North Carolina Baptist State Convention. His proposal was unanimously approved by the Committee August 30, and by the Yates Association Board on September 29, 1957.

Perhaps the most significant part of the history of Binkley Memorial Baptist Church occurred before the organization itself came into being. In November, 1957, the first meeting of a study group looking to the organization of the new church was held at the home of Dr. Ellis. Four families were represented: the Ellises, the M. K. Berkuts, the Bill Moffitts, and the Leo Wagoners. Two important decisions were made at this meeting: first, all those interested in the new church would continue all their activities in the University Church until the actual launching of the new organization; and second, they would meet regularly in an extended series to explore the nature and mission of the Church. It was the hope of the group that this careful and prayerful study would lead them to develop an organization that would be true to the authentic Christian mission and at the same time would be effective and relevant to the community and world of which it would be a part. Among the discussion leaders were:

Dr. E. L. Spivey, Missions Extension Director, State Baptist Convention, Raleigh  
The Reverend James O. Cansler, Minister, Baptist Student Union, Chapel Hill  
The Reverend Hubert Mumford, Superintendent, Yates Baptist Association, Durham  
The Reverend Warren Carr, Pastor, Watts Street Baptist Church, Durham  
Dr. Samuel T. Habel, Pastor, University Baptist Church, Chapel Hill  
The Reverend Garland Hendricks, member of faculty, Southeastern Seminary  
Dr. Stewart A. Newman, member of faculty, Southeastern Seminary

Dr. Luther Copeland, member of faculty, Southeastern Seminary  
Dr. Olin T. Binkley, Dean of Faculty, Southeastern Seminary  
The Reverend W. W. Finlator, Pastor, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh  
The Reverend Ben Lynes, Pastor, Wake Forest Baptist Church  
Dr. Robert Seymour, Pastor, Mars Hill Baptist Church

As the group grew, it was divided into a number of working committees with special responsibilities. Any distinctiveness which is to be found in Binkley Church had its roots here; not that the final form was determined, nor that there have been no new decisions to make, but the fundamental direction was charted and the mood and spirit were established.

As the discussion continued, several convictions regarding the nature and mission of a church gradually developed. For one thing, it became clear that the church must be inclusive in its fellowship, that there must be no stated nor hidden barriers based on race, color or national origin. Again, the church must be actively related to the universal impact of the Christian gospel, not only through the traditional missionary enterprise, but also through all possible agencies of interdenominational activity. A third emphasis was that while the church would operate within the Baptist tradition, a vital place must be found within its fellowship for those who had come into the Christian community through other channels. A fourth conviction was that there must be an active effort to relate the Christian faith and ethic to all phases of personal, family, and social life.

These convictions found expression in the church documents which were adopted during the preliminary period before the formal organization of the church, and in actions that were taken in its early days. The objectives of the church, as stated in its Resolution of Purpose included, "... to provide a church home for college students, and aid them in their search for a satisfying interpretation of the Christian faith, ...to participate in the fulfillment of the world-wide mission obligation of the Church," and "...to relate the principles of Christianity to all matters of human concern in such a way that the Christian's intent will be strengthened to keep his secular life in harmony with his religious life." In the Church Covenant, the group pledged itself "to share Christian experiences with other churches of our denomination as we strive to contribute to the spiritual quality of Christ's universal Church; to cooperate with all churches in their endeavor to bring Christian influence to bear on the affairs of our community and the problems of our society; and to participate in the world-wide Christian fellowship...to recognize the dignity and sanctity of every person, regardless of position or prestige, reflecting thereby our belief in the brotherhood of man; and try to apply the teachings in our ethical relationships in all walks of life." The Constitution provided for the transfer of membership from any other church in the evangelical tradition without requiring immersion, with the proviso that such a member would be ineligible to serve as messenger to any Baptist Convention or Association. In 1967, this provision was widened by eliminating the mention of "evangelical tradition" and substituting an invitation to members of all Christian churches.

The broad invitation to membership was not without later consequences. One of the first actions of the newly organized Church was to apply to the Yates Baptist Association to be taken under watchcare as a first step to full membership. This request was granted, but at the end of the year of "watchcare", the Yates Association voted to delay action on the matter for another year, with additional provision that a special committee be appointed to adjust the differences between the Church and the Association over the matter of the reception of members who had not been immersed. At the 1960 session, the Yates Association voted not to receive the Binkley Memorial Baptist Church as a member, but gave assurance that it would be glad to welcome the Church, should it adjust its position to the traditional Baptist standards of membership. At the same time, it voted to transfer the deed to the 15-501 By-pass property to the Church on the sole condition that the Church assume the balance due of \$350. The inter-racial nature of the Church was not mentioned at the Association meeting and apparently did not affect the decision. Neither the

Church nor the Association has changed its position and as a result, Binkley remains without any Associational relationship.

In the meantime, the ecumenical emphasis has received two expressions. Immediately upon organization, the Church asked to be received as an individual member of the North Carolina Council of Churches, was accepted, and has continued to be an active member of the Council and to be influential in its leadership. After extended study, the Church in 1964 requested that it be accepted as a member of the American Baptist Convention. A major reason for the request was the fact that the American Convention is affiliated with both the National and the World Council of Churches, while the Southern Baptist Convention is connected with neither. Thus Binkley has joined the small but growing group of churches with dual affiliation.

Another of the pre-organizational decisions had to do with a name. Dr. Olin T. Binkley, President of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary at Wake Forest, was formerly pastor of the University Baptist Church and a professor at the University. His liberal spirit, his broad sympathies, his deep devotion to the Christian gospel in all its applications typified the attitudes which the founding group hoped would characterize the new Church. Accordingly, with his consent, the Church was named for him.

The formal institution of the Church was accomplished September 21, 1958, in the auditorium of Hill Hall on the University campus. For approximately six years worship services were held in Gerrard Hall, also on campus, and church school classes were held in other University buildings. A large residence at 508 East Franklin Street was secured to serve as a Church House with facilities for church school classes, evening seminar programs, social events and other varied activities. In the meantime, funds were being accumulated towards the construction of a building. The lot on 15-501 By-pass, which had been secured with the aid of the Yates Association, was traded for a larger lot immediately to the north. Mr. F. Carter Williams was selected as the architect. With a gift of \$25,000 from the Myers Park Baptist Church of Charlotte, the way was open to award contracts for the construction of the new building. The groundbreaking ceremony for the fellowship hall and educational wing was held on October 13, 1963. By the day of the dedication, September 27, 1964, it was already apparent that the new facilities were too small, especially in the educational area. Again it was necessary to rent additional space until facilities could be constructed. These new facilities are presently under construction.

One of the aspects of the pre-organization study had to do with the characteristics desired in a minister for the Church. The specifications were demanding, but as early as July, 1958, Robert Seymour, Pastor of the Mars Hill Baptist Church, was invited to meet with the group. Dr. John T. Wayland of Southeastern Baptist Seminary served as interim pastor pending the selection of a permanent leader. On January 4, 1959, Dr. Seymour was unanimously called to the pastorate and some days later he accepted the call. His pastorate began April 1, 1959, and has continued with increasing effectiveness through the present time. His deep social and personal concern, his selfless devotion and his intellectual leadership have been important factors in accomplishing the dream out of which the Binkley Church was born.

The increasing size and strength of the Church and the expanded vision of its ministry necessitated increasing its staff. One aspect of its conceived ministry was the opportunity to provide in-service training to young ministers in nearby seminaries. This has led to a series of interns beginning with the summer ministry of Jim Forbes of Union Theological Seminary. More recently Herman Thomas and Homer Singletary from Duke Divinity School have served as interns.

In addition to the internship program, the decision was made to increase the professional staff. In 1966, William C. Currin, Associate Minister of the First Baptist Church of Laurinburg, was accepted as a similar position at Binkley, with special attention on leadership in the educational program.

The Church has been blessed by having consistently competent leadership in church music. Mr. James Gibbs was the first Choir Director, and he was followed by Jim Hall, Bert Adams, and Judy Hughes. Mrs. Pearl Seymour has served as organist since the early days of the Church.

Much of the effectiveness of the Church ministry has been due to the fact that the Church has been blessed with capable leadership in all areas of our church life. This leadership has not been limited to the Binkley Church family. The Church has moved out into the life of the community fulfilling its mission by the leadership given to the Inter-Church Council, by the establishment of the Church-related kindergarten and more recently by the neighborhood house ministry to the residents of Carr Court in cooperation with the Multi-purpose Center.

Carved upon the east façade of the National Archives Building in Washington, D. C., is the phrase, "The Past is Prologue." Those of us who have come under the influence of the Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church can think of no more fitting phrase with which to close an account of its first ten years.

### **BINKLEY BAPTIST CHURCH: 1968 - 1978**

By John L. Humber\*\*

Just as the early years were preoccupied with organization, membership growth, building planning/construction, and goal setting in the community, so have the years since then been spent in vigorously pursuing those goals through an expanding program of outreach into the community. There also have been numerous occasions when the Church had to staunchly defend those principles upon which it had been so consciously founded.

As was mentioned above, the Yates Baptist Association finally denied membership to Binkley Church in a statement issued in March of 1966, indicating that because each party considered it would be a compromise in principle to accept the other's point of view in the associate membership controversy, it would be best for each to go its separate way. In 1967, the Church underwent a total self-examination during which it further broadened its requirements for full membership, seeking to reaffirm to itself and to the community its concept of the oneness of Christ's Church among all people. The Constitution was completely revised that year. Whereas the old Constitution offered membership to persons from other churches "in the evangelical tradition", the new Constitution made membership available to all persons from any Christian Church. Restrictions against representing the Church on the Diaconate, as a Church Officer or in a church convention were completely removed from all types of membership, except those associating under Watchcare relationship.

Another challenge to Binkley's open membership policy came in 1973, when the North Carolina Baptist State Convention appointed a Committee of Eleven to study the Convention's relationship with certain "differing" N. C. Baptist churches that accepted people as full members without their having been baptized by immersion. In substance, the Binkley Church responded to the Committee of Eleven by saying that it accepted the New Testament concept of the Christian Church "As a single entity, as the body of Christ in the world," and that baptism was the "public ceremony testifying to the experience that entitles an individual to membership in that body." Therefore, if one's previous baptism by some form other than immersion is not accepted by this membership, it implies that "the body of Christ is not a single entity, but a fragmented one" and that persons not baptized by immersion are not really Christians. This was a concept that Binkley Church could not sanction. While affirming that baptism by immersion had the "greater historical and symbolic clarity" for itself, the Binkley membership did not wish to impose this view upon others who may have become Christians by another method. Having stated this position distinctly and positively, the Church then issued a challenge to the Baptist Convention,

pointing out that if it passed such a resolution, expelling those “differing” churches from the Convention, it would, in fact, be destroying that great Baptist tradition of local autonomy, which principle has permitted Baptists to further the work of Christ in this nation and abroad in so distinctive a fashion. As a corollary, the Convention also would be establishing a precedent for the creation of a church hierarchy and all that implies. The State Convention failed to give the expulsion resolution a simple majority in the fall of 1973, and the following year, defeated a constitutional amendment which would have denied voting rights to all churches that did not require baptism by immersion as a prerequisite to full membership.

As the Binkley congregation sought to maintain this principle of unity in the Christian Church, it expanded its cooperative ventures with other churches and other people. As a member of the American Baptist Convention, it was a participant in the formation of the American Baptist Churches of the South in 1970; membership was approved by the Church on July 18<sup>th</sup> of that year. Binkley members Robert Seymour, Sam Hill, Henry Hellmers and Bob DesJardins played a significant role in the organization of this association. Because the predominant number of member churches are black congregations, its growth and development has been heralded as a major step forward in Southern race relations. Dr. Seymour has represented the Binkley Church in numerous capacities on the national board of the American Baptist Convention, now known as the American Baptist Churches of the U.S.A., as well as the American Baptist Churches of the South.

One of the basic tenets of the Binkley Baptist Church has always been that the financial resources of the congregation should not be expended primarily in the bricks and mortar of a physical plant, but, rather, that they should be used principally to extend the ministry of our Lord through a vigorous program of outreach to people. A number of challenges have been accepted by this Church as it has sought to express this conviction.

Even while planning its new building in 1963, the Church was considering ways in which the new facility could be used for the benefit of the community. The first project was undertaken in the fall of 1965, when the Binkley Kindergarten was opened. This school, with a state approved program, was organized as a separate non-profit enterprise with the Church donating space and utilities. In return, the Kindergarten agreed to make scholarships available to underprivileged children. This school thrived until 1977, when, due to establishment of a state-supported kindergarten, it was converted into a pre-school program for younger children. It is still functioning vigorously.

When an increase in building space became necessary in 1967, due to the growing congregation and the need for additional church school classrooms, the congregation made a deliberate decision to accompany this capital improvement program with a new major effort for outreach in the community – the Carr Court Community Project. Carr Court, a black, poverty-ridden neighborhood in Carrboro, needed help in getting a youth recreation program started. Binkley Church members went to work tearing down an old house which blocked the removal of a smaller structure that was donated by the University Baptist Church to serve as a community center. By October, 1968, this small house was moved into place at Carr Court and, by February of 1969, it was staffed with a Director operating a program eagerly participated in by many of the one hundred children residing in the neighborhood. In cooperation with the Multi-purpose Center of Chapel Hill-Carrboro, the Binkley Church underwrote the budget of the Center during the next eight years. In 1971, VISTA workers began working at Carr Court under the sponsorship of the Chapel Hill Inter-Church Council; they remained for three years. By 1972, the residents of the community had formed the Carr Court Administrative Committee which drew up job descriptions and qualifications desired for the position of director of the Carr Court Center, and hired the new director. In 1975 the Center leadership decided to seek local contributions to financially support the program. In June 1976, the town of Carrboro, through its Recreation Commission, planned to assume full responsibility for the program, and announced the

condemnation of the old building. The success of this program project can be measured through the developing sense of community among the people of Carr Court, by the development of initiative in their own leadership, and, above all, by the children's awareness of new perspectives, opportunities and potential.

By July of 1970, the Ridgefield Apartments for low income families opened at the end of Estes Drive under the sponsorship of the Chapel Hill Housing Authority. In cooperation with the Housing Authority and the Community Church, Binkley responded to the need for a daycare facility for the working mothers of Ridgefield. A daycare center was opened, with the older children at the Ridgefield Apartment Community Center, and the infants and toddlers in the nursery at Binkley, where space and utilities were donated by the Church. The program continued until 1976, at which time the Community Church and the Housing Board terminated their involvement. Binkley Church assumed these responsibilities including housing the entire operation.

The Center was named the Binkley Child Care Center in order to help identify its location; its objectives, organization and operation continue on the same basis, serving the same people.

In July, 1971, the Church made one room available on an experimental basis to the Orange County Association of Retarded Children for a daycare center serving developmentally disabled children. From a nucleus of five children this activity grew to a regular five day a week school with 18 registered students and 7 faculty members under the sponsorship of the Orange Mental Health Association and Binkley Baptist Church. It remained at Binkley until June, 1978, when it moved into larger quarters provided by the County at the Northside Center.

At the same time that this school was getting started, the Church made an offer to the Chapel Hill Recreation Commission to provide space during the summer for the operation of a day camp, knowing that a facility was actively being sought. Because the kindergarten did not operate during the summer, adequate indoor and outdoor areas were available for the camp. This program operated at Binkley each summer for four years. It was moved to the Ridgefield Neighborhood Center in 1976 when the Ridgefield Day Care Center was shifted entirely to the Church.

Not only were the Church's educational facilities fully utilized during the weekdays by the three schools, but the Church also offered its facilities for use by many civic and service groups. Organizations with no operating funds have been given free use of the building, while others have paid a nominal fee to help offset building operational costs. Nearly fifty groups and organizations use these facilities on a regular or occasional basis. In 1976, Binkley extended this ministry to house the community-sponsored Meals-on-Wheels program in the Church Lounge. The program provides hot meals at modest prices, delivered on a five day a week basis to persons living alone who are unable to prepare food at home. The program is now thriving in its second year, being catered by Memorial Hospital.

A number of mission opportunities have presented themselves to the membership over the years. In 1964, Bob Hyatt, a member of this congregation, went to Nicaragua through the sponsorship of the Duke University Religious Council to work toward building and operating a medical clinic in a small east coast village. Binkley sponsored several persons for summer work on this project over the next seven years. In 1975 a new mission opportunity, again involving Binkley members, put the Church in contact with Dr. Bill Hodges and his medical center in Limbe, Haiti. Impressed with Hodges' work, and the hospital's need for assistance, the membership sponsored two of its members, Ed Anderson, a physician, and Barbara Bibb, a registered nurse, both of whom spent two weeks at Limbe, and reported on the conditions and needs there. Anderson and Bibb paid their own expenses, so the Church funds were used for the purchase of medical supplies, which the volunteers took with them. Additional missions teams

spent summer months at Limbe in 1976 and 1977. In 1978 the Church commissioned member Kathi Wagoner as a teacher/missionary to Limbe for a year.

Also in 1975, Binkley Church cooperated with the Inter-Church Council in the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees then coming to the state. While assisting the Ngo family to settle in the Elliott Apartments, many Binkley members made friends with these warm and wonderful people who have become respected members of the community.

As these multifaceted extensions of Church life into the community increased during the passing years, the need for additional staff assistance developed. The mainstay of Binkley Church and its program has been Dr. Robert E. Seymour, who has served as fulltime pastor through the Church's 20-year history. He has exerted dynamic and progressive leadership not merely in the Church itself, but in ever widening circles beyond the immediate community. The calling of Dr. Seymour to this community can be counted as one of this congregation's major contributions to the progressive development of Chapel Hill.

In 1966, the Church called the Reverend William Currin as its first Associate Minister with special responsibilities in Christian Education. In 1970, he was succeeded by the Reverend Dale Sessions, and from 1973 to 1977, the Reverend Thomas Clifton served in this position. In 1978, after a thorough evaluation of staff and program needs, the congregation approved enlargement of the staff to include two Associate Ministers. The Reverend Bruce Page and the Reverend Carol Ripley joined the staff this year in June and September respectively.

There are so many other persons who have worked selflessly in support of the Church and its programs, as staff members or volunteers, that they simply cannot all be mentioned in this brief sketch. June Basile served as the Church's first pianist during the initial year of organization. Since 1959, Pearl Seymour has blessed the Church by serving as pianist and organist. Her total professionalism and loyalty have been a blessing through thousands of events of worship, marriage and recreation, in these 19 years. Rebecca Carnes has served as Director of Church Music for the past ten years, generously sharing her exceptional musicianship as both Choir Director and soprano soloist. Her drive and initiative have led the choir into performing many major works which they could not have otherwise attempted. She followed in the tradition of several gifted and able musicians who preceded her: James Gibbs, Jim Hall, Bert Adams, and Judy (Hughes) Harrison, who was the Church's first Director of Music with expanded duties beyond those of Choir Director. There are two Church members who stepped into the void created by departing associate ministers, and to whom the congregation is greatly indebted. Anne Barnes joined the Church Staff in 1969-70 as Administrative Assistant and once again in 1977-78 as Program Associate. Her exceptional organizational skills and administrative abilities have brought the Church smoothly through these times of membership growth when the staff was much below strength. Also in 1977-78, member Louise Baker served as Director of Christian Education, bringing exceptional strength and vitality, and setting a high standard in this program area. Beginning in 1966, Binkley has been served by a long list of full time secretaries who have been invaluable to the success of the overall Church program. None have given more able and devoted service than Binkley member Claudia Cannady, and Homer Webb, the current Administrative Secretary. The list of faithful staff members could not be complete without the name of Johnny Lane, who for thirteen years has served as Binkley's efficient and reliable Sexton. He has conscientiously borne the major responsibility in allowing the Church to open its facilities to community use.

In May of 1962, Dr. Seymour received a proposal for the establishment of a student minister internship program at Binkley in cooperation with the Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Jim Forbes, who became the first student Ministerial Intern at Binkley, is now a member of the Union faculty. During the time when the new building was under construction and the Church House had to be relocated, the program was temporarily suspended. A new arrangement was made with Duke University Divinity School in 1965, and a long line of

impressive young men and women have served since that time: Herman Thomas, 1965-66 and 1967-68; Homer Singleton, 1966-67; Roger Butler, 1969-70; Dwight McCall, 1970-72; David Swink, 1972-73; Art Scott, 1973-74; Ann Moore, 1974-75. A new program, begun with Southeastern Seminary in 1975, brought Lynne Perkins, 1975-77, and Binkley member Matthew Moffitt in 1977-78.

Binkley faced a major decision when, in 1972, it received an offer to purchase its property. A special committee, headed by Ken Poole, studied the proposal and recommended against selling. Another committee, chaired by Jim Cansler, studied the relationship of Binkley's present site to the Church's ministry in the community. This committee concluded that "where the locus of the Church's life resides is basically immaterial. The real question... is the Church's concept of itself and the priorities of its people." The purchase offer was rejected and the issue was indirectly addressed the next year when Binkley adopted a motto on the cover of its yearbook: "The Church in the Marketplace."

Although Binkley's central thrusts have changed little through the years, there have been certain innovations. For instance, because there was no place in the sanctuary designed for a baptistry and the Church for years faced the continuing necessity of using the baptistry of another church, a decision was made to build an out-of-doors baptistry in the courtyard. It was designed by a special committee chaired by Sam Wilburn, who also built it for the Church. The first baptismal service there was held in June, 1975.

In a community where the University population is so mobile, many of the members are away during the summer. In lieu of Sunday morning church school, a new family-styled service-in-the-round, especially designed for the participation of children, was launched in 1970. These services involve a variety of worship activities consisting of readings, skits and plays, and music of various types. These summer services have become very popular at Binkley and are enthusiastically anticipated each year by the congregation.

Since the late 1960's, when membership began to grow substantially larger, interest developed in increasing small group activities, in seeking ways to reemphasize the extended family idea set forth by the Charter Members. This has been pursued by focusing on small group prayer services, social activities in the various neighborhoods, progressive dinners and other such activities.

A Maundy Thursday Supper, consisting of a very simple New Testament meal, followed by Holy Communion, was held in the back of the Sanctuary in 1967. It has developed into a strong tradition at the Church, as has the Binkley Christmas Eve Service.

As Binkley's membership and programs have grown, considerable energy has been devoted to planning ahead. In 1960-62 the Future Planning Committee operated with Bill Moffitt serving as Chairman. It gave way to the Building Committee, chaired by Jack Whitaker, 1962-64, when the new building was constructed. Since then the Long Range Planning Committee has been ably led by Lin Brown, 1964-65; Fred Ellis, 1965-69; Mary Sanderford, 1974; Larry Nielsen, 1974-76; Warren Howard, 1976-78; and Dave Basile, currently serving, who also led the Building Committee on the occasion of the wing addition build in 1968. In pursuing the exacting task of a thorough self re-examination as preliminary to considering goals for the next decade or two, the Church transformed the Committee into a Long Range Planning Council, expanding its membership and the scope of its responsibilities. In 1977, the Church contracted with the American Baptist Extension Corporation for assistance and guidance in the self study procedure. In this, the twentieth year of Binkley Church's existence, the membership will be planning new initiatives and goals for the life of the Church over the next twenty years. It will be a time of work and faith as society continues to present a growing challenge to the Church and Christians everywhere.



## **BINKLEY: THE SECOND TWENTY YEARS**

**By James Wilde \*\*\***

### **New Construction**

As Binkley moved into its third decade, it was clear that the impact of continued membership growth on programs, staffing and facilities would be a major focus. The stage was set when the survey committee on the Long Range Planning Council presented a report entitled "Which Way Binkley?" in January, 1978, a report which summarized the responses to a 1976 survey. Among the reported findings was a sense that Binkley would soon outgrow its facilities and that a new sanctuary was the most acceptable solution.

Planning for future facilities needs had involved contact with our denominational American Baptist Extension Corporation as early as 1976. A \$1000 contract with ABEC was agreed to in April, 1977, providing for consulting visits during the planning process together with possible construction loans should the process move in that direction. The LRPC developed four subcommittees to organize its efforts. On October 26, 1978, the program committee presented a working paper to a church conference. Included in its suggestions was the that "if space was added, the most appropriate and efficient means is to add a sanctuary."

There was a broad range of responses to this sanctuary position. These were expressed at the church conference and in follow-up small group settings which were organized around deacon family clusters. With additional input from sources such as these, the program committee of the LRPC in February '79 presented a second report, which included a recommendation of "construction of a 5,000-6,000 square foot new/additional, worship/fellowship flexible space which would contain an area which is permanently designated as the area of public worship." A continued diversity of views was evident in four subsequent church conferences. Congregational action took the form of a motion passed in April '79 which authorized the hiring of an architectural consultant who would develop a range of schematic plans along with cost estimates. UNC architect Gordon Rutherford was selected for this task.

In October, 1979, Rutherford presented his report, which outlined five alternatives. A sixth alternative was added from the floor. Of these, two included a new sanctuary, two included a new fellowship hall, and four included new administrative offices. The following December, a church conference passed (by 78% in a secret ballot) an amended motion which called for building a new office wing, conversion of existing offices into classrooms, improvements in kitchen and lounge areas, and a coordinated schematic plan for a sanctuary to be built later. Implementation of this plan was carried out by the January '80 election of a 14-member Building Committee (Nape Baker, chair), appointment of Joe Nassif as building architect in August and a November decision to hire a professional fund-raiser for the forthcoming drive.

In August, 1981, a petition from 54 Binkley members was presented to the Moderator, requesting a church conference to modify the congregation's instructions to the Building Committee and therefore to the architect. Several meetings later, a decision was made in a December church conference to develop plans for a new sanctuary rather than an extension of the existing sanctuary/fellowship hall. Seventy percent of those voting favored this option.

With the general scope of the building project decided, the church's attention in 1982 moved to design details, such as the placement of the baptistry and choir facilities, and to the fund-raising campaign. A professional coordinator for the stewardship effort, Randy Wynn, was selected to assist various church committees, with Larry Nielsen as General Chairperson and Claudia Cannady as office manager. A campaign goal of \$350,000 was established. The four-week campaign began in mid-April '82 and received contributions and pledges totaling more than \$356,000 from 259 members and friends of Binkley.

The next October, the church selected Clancy and Theys as general contractor for the building project. This was followed by final approval of the \$600,000 revised building plans as well as the financing arrangements. Binkley's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in September '83 included the formal ground-breaking ceremony. The culmination of this long effort was the Transition Sunday service on October 4, 1984, when the church began Sunday morning worship in the original worship/fellowship hall and then marched down the connecting hallway to complete worship in the new sanctuary. This new sanctuary was large enough to accommodate 500 people in flexibly arranged seating. Included in the structure was a choir room, sacristy, and a baptistry which connected the narthex to the sanctuary, symbolizing the role of baptism in bringing believers into membership in the Christian faith. There were also skylights and sufficiently large window areas so that worshippers could be aware of the placement of the church in God's creation and in the midst of other human activity. The overall project also included new classrooms and expanded administrative space.

### **Habitat for Humanity**

While a great amount of time and effort was being devoted to our expansion along Willow Drive, attention was also being given to other building interests. The arrival of Ed Huggins as our new Associate Minister in mid-1981 opened the door for important connections between Binkley and Habitat for Humanity. This association began when Millard Fuller, executive director and founder of Habitat, came to Binkley at Huggins' invitation on September, 1981, to speak about his dreams of providing shelter for all of God's children. The following July, Ed led the first Binkley work-trip to a Habitat site in Americus, GA. That initial trip included 8 Binkley youth and 4 adults and was repeated the following two years with even larger crews of volunteers. In the Fall of '82, Tom Hall came from Americus to speak to both the Binkley youth and adults about the efforts of Habitat International, prompting the youth to vote to raise \$800 for a Latin American project.

Meanwhile a group of Binkleyites led by Huggins, Neal Cheek, Alice Miller, Sam Wilburn and Bob Bratcher were making plans to form an Orange County Habitat group. In the summer of '83, Ed preached a sermon entitled "Dreams for Our Country: Shelter for Everyone." This dream moved closer to fruition when Habitat for Humanity for Orange County was established as a formal affiliate of Habitat International in January, 1984, with Sam Wilburn as its first president. Efforts then moved to finding sites, raising money and recruiting volunteers. Millard Fuller returned to Chapel Hill to extend his advocacy of "building houses in partnership with God's people in need" to the wider community. Binkley youth and adult summer worktrips to Habitat sites became an annual rite in locations such as Atlanta, Newport News, Baltimore, Richmond and Greenville and Charleston, SC. The Binkley Habitat Quilters began to meet weekly in 1986 to craft a masterpiece which raised \$400, and church members regularly volunteered their Saturdays to assist with the first building projects.

When the local Habitat unit was given a sizable piece of property on JoMac Road, the pace of building picked up, and Sam Wilburn became the first on-site building foreman. Partnerships between diverse community groups were encouraged as a way of extending community involvement. Binkley responded in 1993 by reaching agreement with the St. Thomas More Church and the Newman Center to build a Habitat house in Culbreth Park. A variety of fund-raising activities, including a gala auction, brought in more than \$42,000 for this project. Ground was broken in March, 1994, and the work began to prepare a residence for Darice and Jack Johnson and their four children. Many folks were involved in the construction phase, led by Bob Goetz, April Baker, Bob Boggs and Dale Osborne. In April '95 the Johnson family moved into Binkley's first Habitat house. Our second partnership for Habitat was with Barbee's Chapel Missionary Baptist Church. A joint yard sale provided major funding for this project. After

ground-breaking in July '97 followed by many joint work crews from the two churches, Doncella Byers and her son were able to move into their newly-dedicated Habitat house in May '98.

A singular commitment to the Habitat philosophy was made by Alice Miller. In 1985 she agreed to become an overseas Habitat missionary in Africa. After training in Americus, Alice left in April '86 for a three-year stint in Zaire. She followed this up in 1993 with a second venture, this time a two-year assignment to Indian lands in South Dakota, where among other activities she coordinated a building blitz led by former President Jimmy Carter. Alice's international interest in Habitat must have been contagious because in 1994 Charles Carver and Carole Stevens went to Hungary on a similar mission for two weeks.

A smaller residential program that Binkley has been involved in is Share-a-Home. This house on Cameron Avenue was opened in 1986 as a low cost room-and-board facility for senior citizens. Binkley is one of four churches to provide representatives to an administrating board for this home. Bonnie and Clyde Hensley have been our faithful delegates.

### **Yard Sales**

Outreach activities at Binkley have often been associated with special fund-raising activities. In the Seventies, Binkley found a fun way to bolster the outreach section of its budget. The first Christmas bazaar was held in 1971 with the leadership of Cassandra Poole. Sales of many hand-crafted items provided an extra \$1500 for the budget. This event evolved into an annual yard sale so that church members could not only recycle little-used items but also provide these items to the less fortunate at very reasonable prices. Leadership of the yard sales came from Monique LoRe, Claudia Cannady, Bill and Hilda Moffitt, Jean Humber, Helen Miller, Becky Robinson, Pat Byrd, Charles Carver, Joy Wood, and Larry Nielsen. As a result of the church construction work in 1984, the yard sale became a biennial event, taking a month to prepare for, using more building space, and requiring more volunteer effort. But there was a pay-off for all this work: yard sale proceeds rose from \$700 in 1975 to \$18,500 in 1995.

Prior to the 1997 yard sale, the church altered its approach. Rather than use the profits as a portion unified budget receipts in order that outreach commitments could be met, Binkley decided that the proceeds were to be utilized for additional outreach activities. The first focus was to be the Habitat partnership which Binkley had entered into with Barbee's Chapel. In line with this goal, Barbee's Chapel was invited to make the yard sale a joint venture. Ruth Ann and Tim Ross and folks from Barbee's chaired this undertaking. The result was a record profit of \$27,000, half of which went to the Habitat project. With virtually every room filled with goods for sale, the Binkley Yard Sale has become a great undertaking and a Chapel Hill classic. Since many hands are needed to pull it off, this fund-raiser has also served as a wonderful community builder and most recently as a testament to interracial cooperation.

### **Organ**

Soon after Binkley moved into its new sanctuary, it became apparent that the electronic organ which had been purchased in 1964 was no longer capable of providing adequate worship leadership. In January '85 the decision was made to launch an organ fund. A musical instruments committee chaired by Doug Kelly began the task of researching and recommending an organ, which would be named the Pearl Francis Seymour Organ. In May '86 the church approved the recommended purchase of a two-manual, 21 rank pipe organ made by the Schantz Organ Company (Orrville, OH) for \$126,000. Fund-raising moved into high gear, and by the time the organ was installed in April '87, more than 80% of the purchase price had been covered. This

lovely instrument was first used in the performance of Brahms' "German Requiem" and soon thereafter in an organ recital by Pearl herself.

## **Peace**

Peace has been an ongoing concern of the people of Binkley church. This has often been manifested through participation in the activities of the N. C. Council of Churches and the Fellowship to Reverse the Arms Race. Tom McCullough joined a peace team to Nicaragua in 1984. In 1987 Binkley joined with other local churches to sponsor a US-USSR Bridges for Peace exchange of citizens. Velma Ferrell was our representative in the first group going to the Soviet Union. When the return group of Soviets came to Chapel Hill later in the year, Rusty and Leo Wagoner hosted a couple of our visitors. Later delegations in the Bridges program included Pat Harriss and JoAnn Flair in 1989, Mary Lou Smith in 1990, and Linda Textoris and Judy Wood in 1991. As the Gulf War hostilities approached in 1991, a candle-light peace vigil was held beneath the Binkley cross. Meditation support meetings were held prior to the conflict, with particular concern that our own Marty Jensen was stationed in Saudi Arabia. As the Cold War faded, the focus seemed to shift to the Middle East. Mary Lou Smith and her family have made several trips to the Holy Land, reaching out to the Palestinian people. Mary Lou has also organized a church class on the conflict and arranged for outside speakers to inform us of the issues involved in that dangerous part of the world. There is also an ongoing relationship between members of Binkley and the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.

## **Inter-Faith Council**

The members of Binkley Church have long been involved in the activities of the Inter-Faith Council of Chapel Hill. The IFC grew out of the work of Church Women United and was formally organized in 1963 through the efforts of Bob Seymour and others. The IFC's many and varied programs of assistance to the needy have utilized the volunteer efforts of many folks from this church. The IFC presidency has been filled by Binkley members for fourteen of its thirty-five years: Bob Seymour, Biruta Nielsen, Wally Hill, Emily Barrow, and Jim Wells. During the Eighties the IFC tackled the hunger and homelessness problems that government was unable to solve. A temporary kitchen was established on Merritt Mill Road, and Binkley and other churches provided temporary shelter. But the dream of a centralized location for these services was championed by Bob Seymour. After he convinced the town to convert its old municipal building on Rosemary Street for this purpose, fund-raising and renovation finally resulted in the dedication of the IFC Community House in 1990. Crews of Binkley volunteers have regularly cooked and served meals at that facility, with leadership from Joan and Bob Williams, Martin and Mary Dunn, Betty Raft, Doug Phillippi, Jaye McDermott, and many others. To this day the IFC remains one of our most important outreach endeavors.

Two other outreach activities of the church during this period should be noted. The prison ministry to the Hillsborough correctional unit received active leadership from Ercell Lynn, Willis Davis, John Stokes and Dave Basile. Binkley sponsored several retreats for prisoners at Camp Caraway when the yokefellow program was in high gear. The first Chapel Hill-Carrboro CROP Walk in 1987 included 35 Binkley walkers. The church has continued to support this fund-raiser for hunger each year with a large contingent of both walkers and sponsors.

## **Music**

Music has always played an important role in the life of Binkley Church. As the membership grew, so did the interest in expanded musical opportunities for our children. This

led to the 1980 decision to create a half-time Minister of Music position. The first person to fill this position was Renee Meriweather, replacing Becky Carnes who had been adult choir director for ten years. Following Renee during this decade were Leanne Langley, Sue Klausmayer and Steve Shearin. In addition to the special musical services presented by the Chancel choir during Lenten and Advent seasons, the three children's choirs frequently added to our worship experience. The congregation was also treated to other outstanding performances:

1979: "Angels"

1979: "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat"

1980: "Godspell"

1982: "David and the Giants"

1983: "Noah", written by our own Laurence Avery (with Chris Frank)

1986: "Ruth"

1986: "Adam's Apple"

1987: "Peace Child", adapted by Laurence Avery

1990: "Amahl and the Night Visitors"

1991: "The Troubbable of Zerubbabel"

1993: "Lazarus"

1995: "Let's Go with Mo"

1996: "Godspell"

1997: "Oh Jonah!"

In many of these performances Priscilla Bratcher was the principal director.

The further expansion of the Minister of Music position to three-quarter time during the school year occurred in 1986. This reflected responsibilities beyond vocal music. The Binkley Brass, featuring Bill Harriss, Manley Fishel and Bob Henderson, performs regularly. In 1984, Pat Nesbitt organized a liturgical dance group which became known as the Chapel Hill Interpretive Movement Ensemble (CHIME). Under Pat's direction, CHIME added beautifully to our worship experiences on many occasions. Since Pat left Chapel Hill, creative leadership of this dance group has been provided by Deborah Greene and Velma Ferrell. In 1989 the family and friends of Jenny Carver donated funds for the purchase of four octaves of Schulmerich handbells. Handbell choirs of adults and youth have practiced weekly and for a decade have added a rich new dimension of worship through music to Binkley. All of these activities have been led and coordinated by the Minister of Music. Anne Hunter Eidson has served in this position since 1989 and has teamed with Martha Tate, who has been our church organist for a full ten years.

A number of new traditions were started during Binkley's second twenty-year period. The first Lovefeast in the Moravian tradition was offered at Binkley in 1978. The church youth group has made it a custom to offer this Christmas gift to the congregation annually. The youth have regularly been involved in the Shrove Tuesday pancake and sausage suppers, after which children of all ages have performed in delightful talent shows. And since 1979 the Carver family, with the assistance of the youth group, has served up a delicious Brunswick stew supper as an annual fellowship event. The latter two meals have helped fund youth group outreach activities.

### **Inclusive Language**

For many years there have been concerns in the church about the use of sexist language. In 1975 a Committee on Sexism was appointed to examine the issue. In anticipation of Binkley's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary a committee was formed to revise the original church covenant so that its wording would not be offensive to women. The new Binkley Church Covenant was formally adopted in January '80 and has since been a regular part of our worship services on communion Sundays. The language of hymns, scripture readings and other elements of worship have been

scrutinized by additional committees. Each time the objective of gender-neutral worship experiences seemed to clash with our classical Biblical and musical traditions. Alternative wordings for hymns were provided in the church bulletins. More modern versions of the Bible were utilized. A small supplementary hymnal entitled “Joy in Singing” was introduced in 1986 in order to provide more gender-neutral wording. A major criterion in the selection of our latest hymnbook, the Chalice Hymnal adopted in 1995, was an attention to gender concerns.

Beyond the issue of language, concern for the role of women in the church and in society was evident in the formation in 1981 of an organization called Southern Baptists for the Family and Equal Rights. With initial leadership from Jenny Weisz and Velma Ferrell, the SBFER was headquartered at Binkley. It attempted to inform Southern Baptists about women’s issues and worked for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and other pertinent legislation. Binkley members in the SBFER were prominent participants in the “Theology is a Verb” conference which focused on women’s issues. This linkage continued for several more Theology is a Verb conferences, the third of which was held at Binkley.

A far less controversial language development was the introduction of sign language into the life of Binkley Church. Starting in 1978 a sign language class was included in our church school offerings to aid the communication with the hearing-impaired. Sandra Stokes led this class and soon began signing the worship services so that such members and visitors would be able to participate. Sandra’s role expanded to the training of other signers and the provision of signing services to the hearing-impaired in other circumstances during the week. Congregation-wide support for those with this impairment was symbolized by the new tradition of signing the doxology, as is now done almost every Sunday morning.

### **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Binkley’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary was a gala occasion. It began with a return to Gerrard Hall on the UNC campus for a service on September 21, 1983, featuring a sermon by Dr. Warren Carr of Wake Forest. The following Sunday, our preacher was charter member Dr. Denton Lotz of the World Baptist Alliance. After dinner on the grounds, the first shovels of dirt were turned for the new sanctuary building. A grand time was had by all.

### **Church Grounds**

The Binkley grounds have undergone significant improvements over the years. In 1976 the large cross on the mall side of the property was installed in memory of Bob Seymour’s mother. The Merrell Flair Memorial Rose Garden was established in 1985. The Edna Hedgepeth Memorial Playground was dedicated in 1986. The Keep Memorial Garden was established in 1998. The ongoing beauty of our property has been largely due to the diligent efforts of Karen Elder and Bonnie Hensley.

In 1985 discussions began in the Diaconate about devoting a section of church property to a columbarium, a place where human ashes could be spread or buried. This was occurring as cremation was becoming more prevalent relative to the traditional cemetery burial. Final approval was given in ’87 to designating a corner of the Keep Courtyard for this purpose. A Memorial Garden Plaque has been placed in the narthex for appropriate identification.

### **Seymour Retirement**

The first Sunday of 1988 brought a surprise announcement to Binkley Church that Bob Seymour, its minister for 29 years, planned to retire at the end of May. That set in motion a series

of responses, including the selection of a pulpit committee, plans for transition and arrangements for an appropriate recognition of the church's first minister. Bob's last official church service featured a Litany of Separation and a sermon delivered by former member Dr. Denton Lotz, Executive Director of the World Baptist Alliance. A retirement committee chaired by John Humber organized a gala reception for Bob and Pearl and instituting a three-fold way of honoring Bob's ministry: commissioning an official portrait to be hung in the church; making a substantial contribution to the IFC Community Center downtown; and endowing the Seymour Symposium, which would regularly examine the "Role and Responsibility of the Church in Today's World". The occasion also included many words of thanks and thanksgiving and the presentation of a book of letters from past and present Binkley members.

Pearl Seymour continued as the church organist until her retirement in October, 1988. Soon thereafter the church voted to designate Bob and Pearl as Pastor Emeritus and Organist Emerita respectively. As we approach the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Seymours continue to live in Chapel Hill and remain as members of Binkley Church which they served so well for so long. In retirement Bob donated a major portion of his library to the church and transferred many of his plants to the church property.

In the light of the retirement of our Senior Minister, the search for Julie Strope's replacement as Associate Minister was put on hold in early 1988. Julie had come to Binkley as Director of Christian Education in 1981, following the resignation of Carol Ripley-Moffitt, who moved to Michigan. Ed Huggins had become Associate Minister in 1981 after Bruce Page resigned to move to New York. Julie was ordained in the Presbyterian Church and became Associate Minister when Ed left in December '83 to become a Navy chaplain. Her pastoral and educational duties were assumed on an interim basis by Jane Harris and Claudia Templeton.

### **Searching for a New Minister**

In February '88 the church elected eleven members of the Pulpit Committee, chaired by Joe Clontz. This committee selected the Rev. Bob McClernon as Interim Minister, beginning in September. Bob had retired after a long pastorate at the Watts Street Baptist Church (Durham). Bill Hoyle, who had come to Binkley in the Fall of '84 as Minister of Youth, became our full-time Associate Minister in 1988 and then carried the day-to-day ministerial responsibilities during the interim pastorates. Rev. Bill Smith of Greensboro was chosen as Interim Minister when McClernon completed his term in June '89. Binkley has been blessed by the vital contributions made by these five people during this important two-year period.

The Pulpit Committee conferred extensively with church members on the type of minister that would be sought. It also arranged for activities which would help the church "let go and move on" to the acceptance and welcome of a new pastor. The committee's search came to fruition in February '90 when it announced its choice of Dr. Linda Jordan to be the next Senior Minister. Linda had grown up in Columbia, SC and graduated from Furman University. Her ministerial studies occurred at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and San Francisco Theological Seminary. After her ABC ordination in Indiana, Linda became an Air Force Chaplain. She later transferred to the Presbyterian Church and served a 10-year pastorate at the Gautier (Miss.) Presbyterian Church.

In March '90 Linda Jordan came to Chapel Hill for a week of get-acquainted meetings with Binkley members. Following a Sunday sermon on March 25 and an evening question-and-answer session, the church overwhelmingly voted to call Linda as its second Senior Minister. She began her ministry at Binkley in May 6 and was formally installed on September 2 during a weekend which featured the visit of Dr. Frank Stagg of Southern Seminary.

## **The Licensure Issue**

Within the first year of Linda Jordan's ministry at Binkley, an event occurred that would dominate her tenure at the church. John Blevins, a Duke Divinity student who had joined Binkley several months earlier, met with Linda and requested ordination. Linda reported to the Diaconate in April '91 that she had recommended to John that he instead request licensure since he had more than a year of divinity studies remaining. This request was routinely referred to a sub-committee, but the fact that John was an acknowledged homosexual meant that the issue would be far from routine. The split recommendation and subsequent discussion made it apparent to the deacons that the church as a whole would need extended time for discussion before it would feel comfortable acting on the licensure request.

The Diaconate retreat in 1991 focused on ways of opening the discussions of homosexuality and the ministry to the full congregation. Gays and lesbians had been members of Binkley for some time, but ministerial roles for homosexuals were controversial in most Christian arenas. A Fall '91 church school class entitled "Human Sexuality and Spirituality" was created. Linda Jordan delivered a series of four sermons on various aspects of sexuality. Dr. Mahan Siler visited to share Pullen Memorial Baptist Church's experiences with similar issues. Interim Associate Minister Steve Hoogerwerf supplied a theological perspective based on his work in the Reformed Church and at Duke. Deacons convened their family groups for discussions. Literature and position papers with a variety of points of view were assembled. An open question-and-answer session was held with John Blevins.

Against this background the Diaconate in February '92 voted in favor (15 yes, 7 no, and 1 abstention) of recommending John's licensure to the church as a whole. The two opposing positions were written up for the congregation. More open discussions took place, and the local media became very interested in Binkley's controversy. After the Church Council established voting procedures and hired a parliamentarian, a church conference was scheduled for April 5 to act on the licensure motion. More than 250 members attended the Sunday evening church conference. After voting down a motion to defer the licensure question, the conference accepted as an amendment a so-called "preface", which was a set of principles concerning sexuality which could provide a context in which to frame the ultimate vote on John Blevins' licensure. The amended motion passed by a vote of 142 yes, 87 no, and 36 abstentions in a secret ballot.

The response to Binkley's action was swift and dramatic. Given the media attention, letters on both sides of the issue were received from around the country. The North Carolina State Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention voted to dis-fellowship both Binkley Church (because of the licensure) and Pullen Church (where a same-sex union had been performed). Seven Binkley deacons resigned from the Diaconate. Members left the church or went to inactive status. After a group of members objected that the "preface" was invalidly accepted since it had not been included in the original agenda, the preface was rescinded two months later. Binkley had paid a huge emotional price for confronting a controversial issue. Its ministerial leadership felt much of this pressure.

Following the licensure vote, Binkley committed itself to an ongoing discussion of faith and sexuality. The following year a church conference voted to establish a committee on inclusive services. Final approval was given to the new policy statement by the Diaconate and Church Council in 1994. Accordingly, after appropriate counseling and planning, holy union services can be conducted for church members regardless of sexual orientation.

## **Racial Reconciliation**

One of the primary initiatives in Linda Jordan's pastorate was in the area of racial reconciliation. Together with Rev. Gene Hatley, Minister of the Barbee's Chapel Missionary



Baptist Church, Linda was instrumental in the formation of the inter-racial Coalition of Chapel Hill-Carrboro Clergy. The coalition was intended to discuss and deal with issues of mutual concern in the community. It played a significant role in the first Seymour Symposium. Linda and Gene also sought to bring our two congregations closer together. The process began when members of both churches formed a reconciliation committee to foster understanding and explore possible interactions. The first fruits of this effort occurred in May '94 at a joint picnic at Barbee's. There followed trips together to the Women's Prison in Raleigh and to the Oxford Children's Home. On March 3, 1996, the first joint worship service was held at Barbee's, including music from combined choirs. Three more joint services have been held since then. The two congregations have also worked together on our last yard sale and on the Habitat partnership house for Doncella Byers. Binkley recently voted to join with Barbee's on a second Habitat house project.

The first Seymour Symposium was held in October, 1993. The whole community was invited to Binkley to hear the keynote message of Dr. James Forbes, our first seminary intern, later professor at Union Theological Seminary (NY) and then Senior Minister at the Riverside Church (NYC). The theme of Racial Reconciliation brought an integrated crowd of people from churches and synagogues throughout the community. The organizing committee chaired by Jim Wilde worked with the Coalition of Clergy (co-chaired by Linda Jordan and Gene Hatley) to arrange a worship service and a set of inter-racial small discussion groups to follow up on the Forbes message. More than 400 people were fed dinner in the best Charles Carver style. The symposium was preceded on Friday night by a service of appreciation for Bob Seymour's ministry at Binkley. Jim Forbes stayed over to preach on Sunday morning. After that weekend, Binkley members knew well why Dr. Forbes had been chosen as one of America's best preachers.

A new outreach focus was initiated during Linda Jordan's pastorate. With leadership from Don and Jean Hamm, an AIDS Ministry Group was formed to provide assistance to those in the community who had been stricken by that debilitating condition. The importance of this effort hit home when we realized that AIDS had touched the Binkley membership. Linda's talents in pastoral care and in grief counseling were particularly important to the families and friends of AIDS victims.

### **Resignation of Linda Jordan**

On February 21, 1994, Linda Jordan wrote to the members of Binkley announcing her resignation, effective the end of August. In her letter Linda cited her perception that a number of church members were "dissatisfied with both the quality of my ministry and my style of leadership." She also mentioned her fatigue after four years in a stressful situation. In the succeeding three months, Linda attempted to prepare the congregation for her departure. Many in the congregation struggled to understand the reasons for her resignation. In her final sermon Linda indicated that at many times in her life, she had been "bound in the Spirit":

Against an adamant promise never to be Baptist again, I felt "bound in the Spirit" to accept the call to come to Binkley...None of us could have imagined four years ago what these years would hold for us. Reinhold Neibuhr once said, "Life is full of grief and grace." I believe that God brought us together for a purpose. And while my mission among you has not been perfect, I feel it is complete.

She was honored for her service to Binkley at a May reception chaired by John Kent and Andrew Owens. In line with its personnel policies, the church granted Linda a sabbatical leave for June through August. After a period of career re-examination she chose to remain in the Chapel Hill area and is currently working as a grief and illness counselor with Triangle Hospice. Her official portrait was commissioned and presented to the church in 1995.

## **Preparing for a New Pastor**

In the wake of Linda Jordan's resignation the Church Council recommended that Binkley hire a congregational consultant who could facilitate its processing of recent events and help to plan for the future. The team of Ruth Wright and Rod Reinecke was selected for this task. They conducted an exit interview with Linda and set up a series of open congregational meetings so that people could express their uncertainties and discuss their hopes.

Meanwhile the church elected a search committee for an interim minister. The committee was fortunate to find a retired Presbyterian minister who was familiar with college towns. In retirement the Rev. Robert Keever had served as the interim at the University Presbyterian Church downtown. Bob began his service to Binkley as we launched the new church year in September. Bob brought the discipline of the lectionary to his preaching and strongly urged that we be faithful to our racial reconciliation heritage. He also facilitated two church school classes, one on feminist theology and the other on traditional Christian doctrine. Bob's time with us was most fruitful, and we are fortunate that he and his wife continue to visit us on occasion.

With Bob Keever in place as Interim Minister, additional duties were given to Associate Minister Dale Osborne. Dale had taken this position in the Fall of 1992, following the August '91 resignation of Bill Hoyle and the interim year of Steve Hoogerwerf. Christian education responsibilities were in the capable hands of Gretchen Jordan, who had come to Binkley in January, 1990. The church office work was handled very well by Lori King and Laura Bridges, who came to Binkley in '92 and '93 respectively. Laura was the first person to fill the new job of business manager for the church. With the continuity of Anne and Martha in the music area, we were fortunate to have this stability in staffing at the time of transition in senior leadership.

In October '94 a Transition Committee co-chaired by Mary Lou Smith and Neal Cheek was appointed to coordinate activities with the consultants and arrange for preachers when Bob Keever was away. The following January the church elected the Pulpit Committee which would search for a new senior minister. After selecting Velma Ferrell as its chair, this group of eleven members conferred with the congregation about the appropriate pastor profile and contacted American Baptist Churches and others for the names of possible candidates. Following a series of visits, the Pulpit Committee recommended that Binkley call the Rev. James Pike of Wilmette, IL to be its third Senior Minister. A native of Indiana, Jim Pike had graduated from Indiana State University and Colgate-Rochester Divinity School. After his ABC ordination, Jim had served as an associate minister in Madison WI and had been senior minister at the Community Church (ABC) in Wilmette for twenty-two years. In February '96 Jim and Susan Pike and son Andy came to Chapel Hill to meet members of the church. Following his sermon on February 18, the Binkley Church in conference voted unanimously to call Jim Pike to be its Senior Minister. Jim's ministry officially began on May 26, 1996, and he was formally installed at a September service which featured Dr. David Bartlett of the Yale Divinity School.

## **Church Affiliations**

Throughout its history, Binkley has had an interesting set of relationships with its fellow Baptists and fellow Christians. This began when, having been kept out of the local Baptist association, Binkley chose dual alignment with both the SBC and the ABC. During the Eighties, as the fundamentalists gained control of first the Southern Baptist Convention and later its institutions, our church searched for ways to channel giving away from the SBC and into the more moderate State Baptist Convention. In 1986 the growing discontent within the SBC led to the formation of the Southern Baptist Alliance, a group of moderate SBC members. Binkley quickly became a member of the Alliance (later to be renamed the Alliance of Baptists) in large

part because of the support it gave to women in ministry and to the integrity of Baptist seminaries. Binkley member John Kent has served as the president of the North Carolina chapter of the Alliance. A Denominational Relations Committee was appointed in 1987 and reactivated in 1990, but as indicated above, our final ties with the SBC were severed in 1992.

In 1996 the Board of Outreach suggested that Binkley consider an affiliation with the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists. The church invited the coordinator of that group to come to Chapel Hill so that we could learn more about its principles. The Rev. Brenda Moulton came in February '97 and explained that ABC churches which welcomed gays and lesbians in all aspects of their church lives had fellowshipped in this way in response to some anti-homosexual rumblings within the denomination. Since Binkley had for some time rejected sexual orientation as a criterion for church involvement, we were accepted into affiliation with the Association in early 1998.

### **Faith and Health**

In the early Nineties, a group of Binkley health professionals began to discuss how the church might assist in the health concerns of its members. In 1993 Norma Willhoit and Martha Henderson went to regional and national meetings where the concept of Parish Nursing was explored. The following year, representatives of five local churches met to discuss a community parish nurse program. In January '96 a Parish Nurse Study Committee convened and conducted a health assessment survey of the congregation. Here in 1998 outside funding has been made available through UNC Hospitals to undertake parish nursing pilot projects. Binkley appears poised to consider whether to participate in such an experiment. The Health Ministries Committee has also introduced a Lenten Healing Service of Worship to the congregation.

The past twenty years have witnessed a continuation of success in electoral politics by member of this congregation. Those who have served the public in elected office are David Price in the U.S. House of Representatives, Willis Whichard in the N.C. Court of Appeals and Supreme Court, Howard Lee in the N.C. House of Representatives and Senate, Verla Insko in the N.C. House of Representatives and Orange County Commission, Don Willhoit on the Orange County Commission, Edith Wiggins on the Town Council and the School Board, and Ruth Royster on the School Board.

### **Looking Ahead**

As we look ahead to our fifth decade and on into the next millennium, we do so with the humility which comes from understanding that all that we do and have comes from God and with confidence that we have been faithful to our Baptist heritage. As a congregation, we have adopted a new Mission Statement this year to frame our planning for the future. We have in place a very strong, dedicated and loving staff, a group of people who know who we are and with whom we are partners in Christ. We have established an Endowment Fund to help with resource allocation. We will soon be making important decisions on capital needs. We have in place many fellowship groups to support one another: Saturday Night Alive (with roots all the way back to 1978 when Bruce Page birthed the Lifestyle Group), Binkley Readers, the Parenting Group, Primetimers, You and Your Aging Parent, 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday Bible Study, the Mental Illness Support Group, and others without formal titles. We have an enduring commitment to a wide range of outreach activities. May we be open to the Spirit in dreaming new dreams and aware of God's grace when we fall short of our potential.

## **THE FIFTH DECADE OF BINKLEY BAPTIST CHURCH**

By James Wilde \*\*\*

### **A Church Home for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

As the fifth decade of Binkley Church opened, it was apparent that a large focus would be on fulfilling the dreams of many for enhanced facilities. Few could have guessed that this achievement would encompass the entire ten years.

The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary theme of “Defining Moments, Defining Dreams” was quickly activated in a series of Fall ’98 discussions sponsored by the Capital Campaign Committee chaired by Lyman Ferrell. Ideas were sought concerning: (1) improved access and entranceways, (2) a new chapel, (3) library and storage space, and (4) improved office space and bathrooms. Architect and Binkley member Phil Szostak was engaged to digest the dreams into a preliminary plan.

A September ’89 Church Conference authorized the hiring of an architect for schematic drawings and cost estimates for the project, which would include renovations of existing facilities. The planning finally came to fruition on February 25, 2001, when the Church adopted a \$1.385 million campaign goal for facility needs and a tithe of \$138,500 for capital outreach. At the same time Phil Szostak’s architectural firm was hired, and former member Robert Wilshire was engaged to provide fund-raising consultation.

Soon thereafter a Capital Funds Campaign was launched, spearheaded by a committee chaired by Caryl Price and C. L. Morton. By the end of June ’01, pledges of \$988,000 had been received from 166 units. (Total pledges rose to \$1.1 million by October ’02.) Given this positive response, an Implementation Committee chaired by Rob Nelson was appointed to move ahead with the plan, beginning with needed renovations to the fellowship hall, kitchen and lounge, bathrooms, hallways and the education wing. These renovations were completed and dedicated at the Church’s 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2003. By that time funds had been sent as part of the capital outreach portion of the Capital Campaign to churches in Cuba and Mexico, to the Orange Correctional Center in Hillsborough, and to Club Nova in Carrboro. Total expenditures had reached \$740,000.

As attention turned to the construction phase, Nape Baker became chair of the Implementation Committee. Then the congregation enthusiastically approved a construction plan on May 16, 2004, a plan which included new driveways, administrative office space, a chapel for meditation and reflection, an expanded narthex opening to a new front door with a covered entryway, a new choir room, conversion of the old office into a new library, and a new large storage area. To achieve the needed funding, a new capital Campaign headed by Claudia and Joe Templeton was launched, with a goal of \$450,000 for building and \$50,000 for outreach.

By March ’05 new building pledges reached \$483,000, and Riggs-Harrod Builders was employed to work with Szostak on final plans and a construction contract. There followed a period of extensive discussions with the Mall and the town about driveway configurations, negotiations over pricing of building elements during inflationary times and waiting for pledges to be fulfilled.

With completion of the town planning board approvals, with a bank’s mortgage commitment, and with sufficient cash on hand, the congregation voted on January 8, 2006, to begin construction. Once the biennial Binkley yard sale was over, Nape Baker was finally able to wear his construction “hard hat”, and Jim Pike quoted a verse from a hymn by Purd Dietz: “Oh keep us building, Master; may our hands ne’er falter when the dream is in our hearts... We build with Thee, O grant enduring worth, until the heavenly Kingdom comes on earth.” The tree-

protective fencing went up, the bulldozers arrived in October, and the final phase of the Church Home for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century had been activated.

Ah, the joy, fascination and challenge to patience involved in observing the builders working within the existing structure and along side the ongoing church activities. Watching the curvature of the choir room and the glass-faced new narthex providing an interesting contrast with the angularity of the existing structure. Using the curvaceous new driveway to first encounter the cross in the new chapel and then welcome all to the new front door, though it would take until Spring '08 before the glass would arrive for the covered entryway. The great drought of '07 provided a stiff challenge to the landscaping committee, with the town finally allowing delay in the completion of that requirement. Binkley's new facilities were officially dedicated on November 18, 2007, with an open house for the new space and the inviting new library. Nape Baker was able to retire his hard hat, and Binkley was blessed to have its Church Home for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century after the efforts of many hands and the missionary spirit to extend its reach.

### **Continuity and Flux in the Church Staff**

Over a period of ten years, it is to be expected that at least some of the faces of the church staff would change, and Binkley was no exception to this overall rule. And yet one person provided a continued staff presence throughout the Church's fifth decade – Dale Osborne. Dale's service as Associate Minister will reach the special total of 16 years by the time the Church celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. In addition to general ministry and periodic preaching, Dale's position continues to emphasize youth and outreach and the readiness to step forward when the senior minister is unavailable. During this lengthy tenure, Dale and Susie have raised three children in Chapel Hill.

Early in the decade Binkley experienced the resignations of two long-time members of the ministerial staff. Anne Hunter Eidson had served as Minister of Music since 1989 and decided to end her 10-year tenure so that she could devote more time to her family, including the two children born to Anne and Jonathan while she was at Binkley. Anne was replaced on an interim basis by Marshall Thomason and then by Christine Shaulis in March '00. The Church said *Auf Wiedersehen* to Christine in the summer of 2002 when her family moved to Colorado. We then said Welcome Back to Leandra Strobe AnafShalom (now Leandra Merea Strobe), some of whose formative years had been at Binkley while her mother Julie Strobe served as Associate Minister. Leandra had pursued music studies at Meredith, Yale, and Indiana before becoming Minister of Music in September, 2002. She will soon celebrate her sixth anniversary in this position.

Also in the music program, Martha Tate, Binkley's second organist, retired in 2007 after completing her nineteenth year of providing this important part of our worship services. She was succeeded at the beginning of 2008 by Bo Lloyd, who previously had served as organist at Pullen Church in Raleigh. During some of the past decade, Caryl Price served as Music Administrative Assistant so that the music minister could spend more time with her children.

Gretchen Jordan came to Binkley in 1990. Following her tenth anniversary at Binkley, Gretchen was the first part-time minister to be awarded a sabbatical leave, during which she visited the Holy Land and the Chartres Cathedral. Upon Gretchen's retirement in 2001, Pam Swanson-Boyd served one year as interim Minister of Christian Education. During this time, an Ad Hoc Staff Study Committee presented recommendations which included expansion of the Christian Ed position to full-time and increased office staffing. When Robin Brooks, a recent graduate of Wake Forest Divinity School, was appointed Minister of Christian Education in September '02, the position was still three-quarter-time because of budget constraints. Robin was ordained by Binkley as an Alliance of Baptists minister. In Fall '05, following the birth of her

second child, Robin resigned because her family was moving to Shelby. Robin was replaced in June '06 by Beth Honeycutt, also a recent Wake Forest Divinity School graduate. In 2007, this Christian Ed position was increased slightly from three-quarters to four-fifths time. During various interims and maternity leave times, this position was ably filled by Velma Ferrell and Dana Trent.

As Binkley moved into its fifth decade, Effie Padula replaced Laura Bridges in the  $\frac{3}{4}$  time position of Business Manager, which she would fill for six years. Effie was followed by Chris Fisher, who completed his four-year tenure in Summer'08. Lori King, finished her eight year term as Binkley's full-time Office Manager in December '99. She was followed by Kathy Trimble in 2000, Jenny Wiseman in 2001, Tricia Lynn in 2002, Tracey Price in 2005, and Maureen Rosen in 2008.

Two additional, volunteer positions were added to the church staff during this period. In 2003, Bill Eastman became the Volunteer Minister of Visitation, thereby extending the ability of the staff to keep in contact with members in need. In 2004, Gloria Lightsey-Lewis became the Volunteer Minister of Visitation, working with the Membership Committee to be in touch with both new and prospective members so that they might more readily be integrated into our faith community. After Bill retired in 2008, Gloria began serving in both volunteer positions.

### **Sabbatical leaves**

Binkley Church has for many years offered a sabbatical leave benefit to its ministerial staff. This feature of its personnel policies was suggested many years ago by member Abraham David. During the Church's first forty years, only Senior Ministers Bob Seymour (twice) and Linda Jordan (once) enjoyed the benefit of this program.

In the Church's fifth decade a sabbatical leave, available roughly every five years of employment, has been utilized on five occasions. In 1998, Dale Osborne became the first Associate Minister to take a sabbatical. He used this time for seminary study in Richmond, spiritual renewal at Green Lake, WI, arts exploration in New Orleans and career development in Massachusetts. In 2000, Gretchen Jordan became the first part-time member of the staff to receive a sabbatical. Gretchen journeyed to the Holy Land, where she visited recipients of our outreach efforts, such as the Hope Flowers School in Bethlehem, and to the Cathedral in Chartres, France, whose floor design is the model for the labyrinth which Binkley has used during Holy Week.

Senior Minister Jim Pike's first sabbatical was taken in the Summer of 2001. He engaged in silent meditation at a Roman Catholic monastery and visited England and Scotland for a Celtic spirituality pilgrimage. In 2003, the years had rolled around so that Dale was eligible for his second sabbatical. He traveled to Cuba after engaging in Spanish language studies and to the Ghost Ranch in New Mexico, a Presbyterian retreat center. Jim Pike's second sabbatical was split between the Summers of 2005 and 2006, during which he studied first at Oxford University and then in New Mexico, where he explored Native American spirituality and sustainability of the Earth.

In 2007, Leandra Strobe became the first Minister of Music to receive a sabbatical leave. Leandra traveled to Ireland to explore Celtic art and music and attended Peace Camp sponsored by the Baptist Peace Fellowship.

The Church is blessed to be able to offer such a benefit to its ministerial staff and to have such able interims to serve while they have been away: April Baker, Carol Ripley-Moffitt, Bob McClernon, Gloria Lightsey-Lewis, and Bill Eastman. Efforts are presently under way to do appropriate financial planning in anticipation of future sabbatical use.

## **The Labyrinth**

In 1999 Gretchen Jordan was instrumental in introducing the congregation to the labyrinth as a centering device which is especially valuable during Holy Week as one looks forward to Good Friday and to Easter. It has become a Binkley tradition to obtain a copy of the floor design from the Cathedral at Chartres, France, for use during each Holy Week. With sanctuary seating moved to the periphery, the 40-foot wide canvas labyrinth has been made available to the whole community. In 2008 ten Chapel Hill congregations co-sponsored this Holy Week tradition. Upon Gretchen's tenth anniversary at Binkley, a fund was established to acquire a labyrinth in her honor. This effort came to fruition in Summer '08 when the Labyrinth Committee utilized a design created by Leandra Strope to place a stone-outlined labyrinth in the Binkley courtyard, offering the Church new opportunities for contemplation. Further work is planned to enhance this natural setting.

## **Welcoming and Affirming Baptists**

During the decade Binkley celebrated the tenth anniversary of its affiliation with the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, as well as the anniversary of the licensure vote. In 2006, the Church also hosted a regional meeting of AWAB congregations and members with national director Ken Penning present.

A welcoming stance such as Binkley has taken began to have ripples in another of the Church's affiliations – with ABC-USA. In Spring '05, Pastor Jim Pike reported that several of the ABC regions were attempting to oust AWAB congregations. An ad hoc committee chaired by Stacy Shelp was appointed to monitor this situation for the congregation. In June, 110 Binkley members signed on to a letter to the ABC General Board which reaffirmed support for Baptist principles, including local church autonomy. This position received strong support from Dr. Walter Parrish, our ABCOTS executive. The 2005 ABC biennial convention then rejected efforts to purge welcoming churches. When a Pacific region withdrew from the ABC in 2006 because of its stance on homosexuality, it was a clear indication that we must be strong in affirming our Binkley Baptist principles as part of centuries-long traditions. Church members do this by maintaining ties with AWAB and ABC, participating in Gay Pride parades, and upholding the welcoming tenet.

A most dramatic example of standing firm for original principles was the response to picketing by Fred Phelps and a few members of his Kansas church in May, 1999. While these anti-gay people carried hate-filled signs, the Binkley sanctuary was filled with Sunday worshippers who heartily sang "All Are Welcome in This Place!"

## **Boy Scout Troop 820**

In April, 2001, Jim Pike informed the Church of the sad news concerning the Boy Scout Troop that Binkley had sponsored for 39 years. The national BSA office had announced that it was not going to renew the troop charter in view of the Church's welcoming and affirming stance. The national Boy Scouts had recently won a Supreme Court case which permitted its discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Binkley was proud of its long relationship with Troop 820. The Troop expressed its great thanks for that long sponsorship as it left to find a new affiliation.

## **Health Ministries**

One of the most active groups within the congregation during this period has been the Health Ministries Committee. Its importance was recognized when it became a standing committee of the Church Council in 2000. While the Church decided that it was not ready to create a Parish Nurse staff position, it did sponsor its first Student Health Minister in 2003 when Barbara Rigsbee came from the Duke Divinity School and School of Nursing for a four-month internship. Barbara provided significant information to the congregation and organized a health fair. A valuable new resource was created with the establishment of Margaret's Closet, named for Don Willhoit's aunt and Marge Miles' mother. Linda Textoris and Marge Miles spearheaded an effort to gather various medical devices which could be loaned to members with temporary needs.

Health Ministries has regularly sponsored semi-annual healing services. Gladess Crisp led a group which knitted prayer shawls for those with critical needs. A care team was formed to provide intensive help for church members. The committee led the effort to acquire emergency telephones, a defibrillator, and hearing assistance devices for use in worship services. Martha Henderson was ordained as a Geriatric Nurse Practitioner. Blood drives were sponsored, and hardly a newsletter issue goes by without an important reminder or tip from this committee. Clearly the connection between faith and health has been strong in this congregation.

## **Music and Fine Arts**

During the recent discernment process, members of Binkley reaffirmed the importance of music in the Church's worship and fellowship. A special feature of the Christmas '98 season was the production of "Amahl and the Night Visitors", featuring James and Caryl Price. A major highlight was the 2002 production of "Jesus Christ, Superstar", with a "cast of thousands" directed by Christine Shaulis and Priscilla Bratcher. In 2007, composer Malcolm Dalglish came to direct his "Hymnody of Earth", a piece for choir and hammered dulcimer. In 2008, the Chancel Choir performed Leonard Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms".

Outside of worship, a series of coffeehouse performances was begun under the leadership of Debra Lynn and Janet O'Neal. Among the performers were folksinger Kate Campbell, Anglican songwriter Garth Hewitt, bluegrass group Molasses Creek, and member musicians Caryl Price, Mike Davis, Anna Kirby, and Billy Barnes. Also sharing their talents were Brooks deWetter Smith on flute, Nathan Daughtrey on marimba and David Connell on the organ, in addition to a wide variety of outside groups.

Also begun during this decade was the Binkley Band, led by Tim and Debbie Pyatt, and the Women's Drumming Circle, which originated with the Women at the Well and the periodic women's retreats.

A major enhancement of the music program at Binkley was the 1999 gift of the 5'10" walnut Kawai piano which now graces the sanctuary. This lovely instrument was given in memory of Sib Dorton by his many friends and the Dorton family.

The Fine Arts committee has significantly enhanced the Church's worship experience. Under the leadership of Rachel and Laurence Avery, this group has exhibited Japanese prints and Biblical art, poetry and environmental displays. It also has sponsored Fall Art Exhibits of members' creativity. And a separate group of needle-proficient women is responsible for crafting new banners to add inspiration within our sanctuary, one of which is expected to celebrate Binkley's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



## **Earth Ministries**

Society's increased attention to ecological concerns was well reflected at Binkley. The environmental group became the Earth Ministries Committee, under the leadership of Herman Greene, who completed a D.Min. program in Spirituality and Sustainability at the United Theological Seminary (Chicago). The Church began to celebrate Earth Sunday each Spring, and then in 2003 Creation Season became a regular part of Binkley's liturgical calendar for the eight weeks prior to Advent. This committee has regularly informed the congregation about personal steps and group efforts which could improve stewardship of Earth's resources. A special committee was appointed in 2006 to consider modifying the Church Covenant to include a commitment to all of God's creation. The recommended changes were approved by the Church in Conference in January '07. (All three of Binkley's covenants are reproduced at the end of this essay.) As the Church's anniversary approaches, Earth Ministries is organizing a church school class focused on the environment and is discussing whether to seek a seat on the Church Council through a reconsidered constitutional amendment.

## **Outreach**

Binkley's outreach traditions have been maintained during the past decade. Each November there has been an Alternative Gifts Fair, during which a variety of non-profit groups offer opportunities for different holiday remembrances. One such group has been the ALS Fund, which has used some of Doug Phillippi's artwork to support those who suffer from Lou Gehrig's disease which often results in respirator dependence. Each Spring church members, mobilized by Linda Textoris and others, have joined with marchers and donors throughout the community in the CROP WALK against hunger. During summertime, Dale Osborne has regularly led groups of youth and older members on trips to Habitat for Humanity sites in the Southeast. Judy Sordean has led mission trips to Honduras for Heifer International, along with Ryan Peck and David Preston, and Connie Gates has regularly spent months at the Jamkhed Institute in India.

Two large hurricanes offered special opportunities for service. After Floyd devastated much of eastern NC with flooding in 1999, many volunteers headed east to assist with recovery. Particularly persistent was Tim Ross who helped a family return to its Grifton residence with his building skills over a three-year period. When Katrina inundated New Orleans in 2005, Martha Henderson took her medical expertise to the area and Dale Osborne headed a housing rehabilitation team the following summer.

The biennial Yard Sale seems to get bigger as a community event. Leadership has come from Ruth Ann and Tim Ross, Larry Nielsen, Sue Schroeder, Anne Winfield, Tom Fewel, Carole Stevens, Ann Cockrell and folks from Barbee's Chapel, reflecting the re-naming as the Binkley-Barbee's Yard Sale. In 2008 it was agreed that the two churches would each select recipient outreach projects of half of the net proceeds. Proceeds reached a record total of more than \$40,000 in 2006 and were above \$36,000 in 2008.

Another on-going Binkley-Barbee's partnership has been in the Habitat for Humanity projects. In 1999, a house was built for Kimberly Alston. In 2001 the Alice Miller house was built for Cora Smith in memory of Alice, who passed away in 2000 after many volunteer efforts for Habitat in the community and around the world. The latest Habitat partnership project was a Hillsborough home for Thyias Moore and Lamontie Compton in 2008.

At a time when there was increased attention to the public policy issue of immigration, including a church school class on the subject, there has been renewed Binkley interest in refugees. Four Montagnard refugees arrived in the area in 2005, including Dul Rahlan, who brought his wife and eight children (the Siu family) the following year. The Binkley Refugee Resettlement Team, chaired by Allen Smith, provided wonderful assistance as this family made

its home in Durham. This resettlement challenge expanded in 2008 with the arrival of a Burmese family of four.

### **The Pre-School and Day Care Center**

In 2008 the Binkley Pre-School celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as one of the Church's earliest educational endeavors. During 35 of those years, Marlene Dickison has served as first a pre-school teacher and later as its director.

In 1976 Binkley began to house the Ridgefield Day Care Center in its building as an outgrowth of an earlier operation in the nearby Ridgefield Apartments. This evolved into the Bi-City Day Care Center, which continued to provide this important service until it folded in 2002. Since that time several other proposals have been considered for use of Binkley's educational wing space. It seems likely that these rooms will soon host a new group of lively children.

### **Racial Reconciliation, Peace and Justice**

Binkley has continued its partnership with Barbee's Chapel (recently renamed Barbee's Chapel Harvest Word) with particular emphasis on the twice-yearly joint worship services, during which the expanded congregations anticipated possible duets between Rev. Gene Hatley and Rev. Jim Pike. Joyous worship was always followed by good fellowship. The personal aspects of friendship, support, and fellowship are carried on through the monthly meetings of the reconciliation group from both congregations. They have also joined in visits to the Women's Prison and with others from around the state in marches to the Legislative Building for social justice. This partnership was recognized in 2001 when the two congregations received the Bridge-Builders Award at the Chapel Hill MLK banquet.

Attention to the search for peace has largely focused on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Mary-Lou Smith has made numerous visits to the Middle East and especially to the Hope Flowers School in Bethlehem, along with her husband Brooks and Martha Henderson. Mary-Lou has also been instrumental in arranging presentations by reconcilers and regular peace vigils that have been held at churches throughout the Triangle.

The death penalty has been of on-going concern at Binkley. In 2001, the Board of Outreach sponsored a resolution through which Binkley would go on record as supporting a death penalty moratorium in North Carolina. Though some members argued that a Baptist congregation should not by a majority vote appear to speak for all members, this resolution passed by a wide margin. Tom Fewel has had a long-time involvement with the People of Faith Against the Death Penalty, which has regularly held vigils at local churches (including Binkley) prior to scheduled NC executions.

Many Binkley members have been active in the formation of a community coalition which is affiliated with the national Industrial Area Foundation. This group is seeking to raise awareness of a wide range of social justice issues through dissemination of information and contacts with public officials.

### **Seymour Symposium**

During its fifth decade, Binkley held two more Robert E. Seymour Symposiums, carrying forward the legacy of its first pastor. In April, 1999, a Bob Goetz-led committee brought Will Campbell, Southern author, farmer, and civil rights leader, to headline a conference on "Faith, Belief and Moral Authority". The third Symposium took place in March, 2004, focusing on the topic "Faith, Peacemaking and the New World Disorder". There were four presenters: Professor Gary Dorrien of Kalamazoo College, Reverend Joan Campbell of the National Council of

Churches, Professor Charles Kimball of Wake Forest, and our own Congressman David Price. This third Symposium committee was chaired by Fred Schroeder. The fourth Symposium is scheduled to take place during Binkley's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year.

### **Organ Transplantation**

When Jim Pike and his family came to Binkley in 1995 to be our third Senior Minister, church members were well aware that son Andrew had been the recipient of a heart transplant in Pittsburgh in 1982. Andy did much to inform the congregation of the importance of having people declare their willingness to be organ donors. This importance was reinforced in 2003 when Andy's kidney started to fail, prompting a search for a suitable donor. It turned out that his father was a very good match. And so Binkley rejoiced that one of its members would be able to receive such a gift of life and granted Jim Pike a medical leave of absence to facilitate the recovery period after the successful transplant in June '03. Andrew and Jim have celebrated the fifth anniversary of this miracle of medical science in the Church's anniversary year while both are enjoying good health.

### **Loss**

During its fifth decade, Binkley mourned the passing of its founding inspiration, Dr. Olin T. Binkley, and of founders who had remained members of the Church: Elizabeth and Fred Ellis and June and David Basile. The full list of the Charter Members appears at the end of this essay.

### **Jim Pike's Retirement**

As Jim Pike reached his tenth anniversary at Binkley, he could look back with the realization that he had been a strong stabilizing force for the congregation. He was able to bring people together in a calm fashion while strongly supporting Binkley's founding principles, particularly inclusion. He attended a conference entitled "Ending Well, Finishing Strong: Completing a Ministry Career", which focused his attention on the upcoming transition. A major result was his recommendation that the Church engage in a process of Appreciative Inquiry with a consultant.

In March '06 a Discernment Committee, co-chaired by Jan Clark and Jim Wilde, was appointed to work with consultant Daniel Pryfogle. All members of the congregation were invited to identify the highlights of their Binkley experiences and to suggest provocative propositions which could build on these positives. Based on the premise that "we have everything we need", the Discernment Committee met with many groups and committees to generate additional experience-based dreams, all of which were compiled and summarized in a February '07 report. It is hoped that open dialogue and discussion of Church issues would be an on-going legacy of this discernment process.

In a March '06 letter to the congregation, Jim Pike announced his plan to retire in June, 2007. The Church held a two-day celebration of Jim's ministry, as arranged by a committee chaired by Sue Schroeder. In Jim and Susan's honor, a bench and weaving declaring that "All Are Welcome" were placed at the new entry to the Church and a table and chairs for the new library. A Memory Book of letters was also presented to the Pikes. A portrait of Jim Pike was placed in the Gallery of Ministers. Jim reminded the congregation that by ABC rules he could no longer have professional contact with the Church from which he retired. Since the Pikes continue to reside in Chapel Hill, Binkleyites cherish the opportunity for social contacts with these special friends.

## **Interim, Transition, and Search**

After the completion of the formal Discernment process, the Church moved forward with the appointment of two new committees. The Interim Committee, chaired by Anne Barnes, was charged with finding a person to serve as the Interim Minister following Jim Pike's retirement. The committee recommended that the Church call Reverend Denise Cumbee Long to serve in this position. An ordained UCC minister, Denise had been serving on the staff of the North Carolina Council of Churches. She began her service in August '07 and quickly sought to learn about all aspects of the Binkley program of ministry.

Moderator Alice Glover also appointed a Transition Committee, chaired by Wayne Price, to research staffing structures and recommend a job description which would guide the process of searching for the successor to Jim Pike. The discernment process had indicated that there was some sentiment for considering a co-ministry or a team ministry in addition to the senior ministry that Binkley had used for its first three pastorates. After the Transition Committee had surveyed the congregation and held open discussions, it recommended that the position carry the title of Minister, that this person would be responsible for supervising the other members of the ministerial staff, and that the Minister should foster a team environment. This recommendation was approved by the Church in Conference in January '08.

Shortly thereafter the Church engaged in its proscribed electoral process for selecting the Minister Search Committee. The ten persons who were elected chose Lori Cahill and Joe Clontz to be the co-chairs of this committee. At the present time the Search Committee is hard at work, seeking to identify the fourth person who will assume pastoral leadership of Binkley Church.

## **The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Alive in the Spirit**

The celebration of the first fifty years of the Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church is being organized by a committee headed by two "Binkley kids", Kimberly Eastman Zirkle and Matthew Ripley-Moffitt. Many present and former members are expected to gather for the gala weekend in September, during which many memories will be shared. An anniversary Carver Brunswick stew and square dance are planned for October. The fourth Seymour Symposium will be held in the Spring of '09. And throughout the year there will be many remembrances of happenings that have shaped this congregation. Our inspiration has come from God and has been nurtured by many over these fifty years.

## **Looking Ahead**

As Binkley Church heads into its sixth decade, its members excitedly await the calling of its fourth Minister. We are pleased that the long building process has been completed so that full use can be made of the expanded and renovated facilities. Among the challenges that we face is the fulfillment of our promise to companion the building project with a tithe of outreach endeavors. We continue to be blessed whenever new members join this community of Faith. We realize from the recent yard sale experience that much can be accomplished when many work together in a common endeavor. We are thankful that the Christian spirit which is nurtured within the congregation enables us to accomplish much in the community and around the world. And we would do well to remember the words of Seymour Symposium speaker Dr. Joan Campbell: "We are not called to be successful – we are called to be engaged."

\* Courtland Smith was a member of Binkley Church and a faculty member in the Department of History of Louisburg College when he authored this chapter.

\*\* John L. Humber was a long-time member of Binkley Church, served as scoutmaster of its BSA troop, and was a history buff. He contributed this essay on the occasion of the Church's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

\*\*\* James Wilde has been a member of Binkley Church since 1972. His two essays were written for the 40<sup>th</sup> and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, in appreciation for this wonderful Community of Faith. As an amateur historian, he apologizes in advance for any errors or omissions.

As we come to the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church, we once again express our thanks to those people who, led by the Holy Spirit, dreamed unique dreams and launched this church on a faithful journey:

### **The Binkley Charter Members**

BAILEY, Barbara B.	HAWES, Horace
BAILEY, Rand	LLOYD, Jimmie
BASILE, David G.	LLOYD, Thelma
BASILE, Janine	LLOYD, Thomas W.
BASILE, June	LOTZ, Denton
BARNETT, Betty	MOFFITT, Hilda
BARNETT, Richard	MOFFITT, John W.
BERKUT, Cora Lee	PENDERGRAFT, Elmer
BERKUT, Jack	PENDERGRAFT, Ernestine
BERKUT, Mike K. **	RAWLS, Irma
BERKUT, Nancy	RAWLS, Reginald
BOLCH, Oscar H., Jr.	RICE, Wilma
CREEL, Bill	SCOTT, Beverly
CREEL, Graham	SCOTT, Peggy
CREEL, Ruby	SCOTT, Watts
ELDER, Glen H.	SMITH, Irene
ELDER, Karen	SMITH, Kendall O.
ELLIS, Barbara	UNDERWOOD, Evelyn
ELLIS, Elizabeth	WAGONER, Grace
ELLIS, Frances	WAGONER, Leo
ELLIS, Fred W.	WALL, Paddy Sue
ELLIS, Mary Beth	WHITAKER, Iris M. **
FREEMAN, Donald	WHITAKER, Jack
FREEMAN, Ina B.	WHITE, James B.
GIBBS, James	WHITE, Joyce
GILMORE, Irene	WILBURN, Nettie **
GILMORE, J. Ed	WILBURN, Sam **
GILMORE, James	
GILMORE, John	

\*\* Current Resident Members

## **THE ORIGINAL CHURCH COVENANT (1958)**

Having been led by the Holy Spirit to profess our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and through this faith to commit ourselves to God, our Father; and having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and having been led, as we believe, to constitute the Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church, we join ourselves together in the bond of Christian love and covenant as a body of Christ.

In relation to each other, we agree: to respect and tolerate, in the spirit of Christ and in Christian fellowship, differences of opinion in all matters pertaining to church affairs and to our individual lives; to be ready always to forgive others their trespasses in the spirit with which God continually forgives our trespasses; to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; and to aid one another in times of distress and illness.

In relation to our Church, we agree: to work for its spiritual growth as it seeks to understand and fulfill its mission of proclaiming the redemptive love of Christ, both locally and world-wide; to support faithfully its ministry and to participate regularly in its worship, in the observance of its ordinances, and in the study of its doctrine; to promote a vital Christian education program which provides full opportunities for its members of all ages to worship, to study, and to grow spiritually; to engage daily in personal and family devotions in an effort to strengthen our family-centered community of faith; to re-evaluate constantly the effectiveness of its total program for the purpose of meeting the changing needs of members of its congregation and community; and to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the conduct of church affairs.

In relation to other churches, we agree: to share Christian experiences with other churches of our denomination as we strive to contribute to the spiritual quality of Christ's universal Church; to cooperate with all churches in their endeavor to bring Christian influence to bear on the affairs of our community and the problems of our society; and to participate in the world-wide Christian fellowship.

In relation to the world, we agree: to recognize the dignity and sanctity of every person, regardless of position or prestige, reflecting, thereby, our belief in the brotherhood of man; and try to apply the teachings of Jesus in our ethical relationship in all walks of life.

## **THE SECOND CHURCH COVENANT (1980)**

Confessing our faith in Jesus Christ, we covenant with God and one another to live together as members of this church in obedience to God's will as it has been and shall be known to us. Ever mindful of the welfare of this congregation as part of the whole company of Christ throughout the world, we promise to express our faithfulness to Christ in love to one another. The Spirit of God assisting us, we further promise, insofar as we are able, to attend the services of this congregation, observe its sacraments, share in its work, support its mission to all people – those near at hand and those in distant lands – and endeavor in all aspects of life to be a fruitful body of Christians.

## **THE PRESENT CHURCH COVENANT (2007)**

Professing our faith in Jesus Christ, we covenant with God and one another to live together as members of this church in obedience to God's will as it has been and shall be known to us. As part of the body of Christ throughout the world, we promise to express our faithfulness to Christ in love for one another and for the whole of God's creation. The Spirit of God assisting us, we further promise to attend the services of this congregation, observe its sacraments, support its mission to all people, practice faithful stewardship of our possessions and be conscientious caretakers of the Earth, endeavoring always to be a fruitful body of Christians.