

CHAPTER 5

THE SELECTION OF A PASTOR

The providence of God brought together three visionary parties in the selection of a pastor to lead the new Christ Covenant church: a Christ Covenant pulpit committee, THE PCA Mission to North America (MNA) — which was actively seeking to plant a Resource Church — and a pastor.

Those who were members of the church at that time still speak in awe and praise when they remember how the “hand of the Lord” directed all who were involved in the process.

THE PULPIT COMMITTEE SEARCH

The first step towards calling a pastor was a retreat at Lake Norman in 1982 that brought together the Elders of Christ Covenant. They appointed a pulpit committee, comprised of Bernie Lawrence and Bob Tarte.

The committee stepped out in faith, believing that the Lord had a particular man chosen for the church.

“We looked at man after man,” Bernie recalled. “We came very close to bringing in a pastor at least twice. One got right up to the point of saying ‘yes’ when he changed his mind. It was very hard!”

They would realize later why it had been impossible to place these men. God had His own man lined up for the job.

A FORWARD THINKING DENOMINATION

While Bernie and Bob were diligently searching, the PCA was working on a plan of its own. The General Assembly had directed its outreach arm, the Mission to North America, to develop a process for actively planting “Resource Churches” throughout the country. The goal of each of these plants was to establish a “significant ministry in a significant population area.” Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama had made a commitment to provide funding for the initial “Flagship Planting Project.” A number of potential locations were identified. The next step: locate a pastor for one of the proposed churches.

“And so they came,” recalled Harry Reeder III. “We were in Florida at Pinelands Presbyterian Church at that time, and Terry Gyger — who was the MNA Coordinator for Church Growth — came and talked with me and asked me to consider one of about 10 cities. In our conversation, Charlotte was mentioned. I told him I was really very happy where I was. The Lord was blessing the ministry at Pinelands, but the idea of returning to Charlotte certainly attracted my attention. I told him I’d pray about it.”

THE PREPARATION OF THE PASTOR

There had been many steps in the process that moved Harry Reeder from Charlotte, where he was born, to Florida, where he ministered as a pastor.

His father, Harry Reeder II, was in baseball as a professional umpire, and the family moved often — to Atlanta, Waco, Greensboro, Raleigh, Charleston, then back to Charlotte. During his growing up years, young Harry was primarily interested in athletics — baseball in particular. However, by the time he graduated from East Mecklenburg High School in 1966 and started college at East Carolina University in Greenville, he had switched to golf. He left college in 1968; it was that summer that he met Cindy.

A COMMITMENT

Cindy, born and brought up in Charlotte and home from UNC-Chapel Hill, was working a summer job in the Ladies' Department of Sears. One evening, Harry came to pick up his mother, Cindy's "boss." They met, began dating, and by October were engaged. They were married in January of 1969.

Both were from strong Christian families. Cindy had become a Christian at the age of 10, but Harry had never actually committed himself to Christ. All he was thinking of then was finishing his college education and breaking into professional golf. He was driven to succeed as a married man, and there were a few matters that he felt needed attention including the finding of a church that would be "theirs." So, they visited some congregations, and he picked "a little Presbyterian church on East Seventh Street," Faith Presbyterian Church, where he could sit back and feel comfortable — he thought.

They walked into the church that next Sunday, Harry recalled, "and everyone had their Bible." A second surprise came when one of the Elders recognized him. It was Harold Jones, who had played football, baseball, and basketball with his dad. The pastor was Dick Tevebaugh, who years later would become associated with Christ Covenant!

THE CALL TO MINISTRY

In the fall of 1969, Harry accepted Christ and joined Faith Presbyterian Church! Two weeks later he was leading the Youth group

The months that followed, however, were anything but smooth for Harry, as God began to deal with him, a new convert, struggling with his call to the ministry.

Determined to complete their educations, Harry and Cindy faced some difficult challenges as a young couple. Harry worked odd jobs, while attending summer school. Cindy was busy finishing school as a chemistry major. During that time, Harry was considering studying for a degree "maybe in criminology, law enforcement, or law" — while continuing to pursue golf since he had one year of athletic eligibility remaining. Making the golf team was the thing. It was a plan

that would mean a move from Charlotte back to Greenville. But almost at once, things began to point Harry away from a career in sports.

That summer, Harry took courses at East Carolina, while working with the Trinity Freewill Baptist Youth group. At that time, he became convinced of his call into full-time ministry. Cindy was “thrilled,” admitting later she had always hoped to serve as either a missionary or a minister’s wife.

Harry wholeheartedly accepted the call and enrolled at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia.

COVENANT COLLEGE DAYS

“We pulled into Covenant College in 1971,” Harry said. “I didn’t have a job. We didn’t have a place to live. We were expecting our first child, Jennifer, and I had \$75 in my pocket.”

“The Lord blessed” as the young pastor-to-be finished his undergraduate schooling. But the journey was a difficult one. To make ends meet, Harry worked three part-time jobs, and Cindy taught chemistry at Lookout Mountain High School. Harry served as the Youth Pastor at Simpson Memorial Methodist, later filling that position at St. Elmo Presbyterian Church. During his senior year, he agreed to assist a group as they started an independent Bible Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

FURTHER STUDIES

After graduation, Harry felt he should stay in the area for a while longer since his ministry demands were growing in proportion to the flourishing Bible Church. In the meantime, he also began classes at the local Baptist seminary, Tennessee Temple. Two more children were born, Harry IV (Ike) and Abigail.

By 1979, Harry realized his need for a change. He later explained that “the Lord moved him” toward the Presbyterian Church in America, and he decided it was time to finish seminary. So the family moved to Miami, and he enrolled at Westminster Seminary’s southern campus at the Florida Theological Center.

PINELANDS IN MIAMI

The following summer, Harry became pastor of Pinelands Presbyterian, engaging in a revitalization ministry. By 1982, when he graduated from seminary with a M.Div. degree, the church had grown from 60 attendees to a congregation of 400. As Harry explained it, the church grew not through marketing or his use of the Spirit’s gifts but “because of the power inherent in the Gospel itself.”

And now Terry Gyger, who was from the Miami area and knew Harry personally, had come to him and asked him to plant a “flagship” Resource Church for the General Assembly of the PCA, and he had mentioned the Charlotte area.

Should he return to Charlotte to plant a “significant” ministry? It had been his home prior to his conversion; there would be old friends who had not yet met the “new man” he had become, not to mention the God-sized mission many hoped he would agree to move forward. The urge to return grew in his heart until, in 1982, Harry agreed to visit his old hometown and, together with Terry, to look over the changing city.

Harry saw clearly from the demographics that the ideal site for the plant was in southeast Charlotte.

AN INVITATION TO CHARLOTTE

But there was already a PCA church there — Christ Covenant — “a small work of about 38 people.”

After being told of the “Flagship Project” opportunity in Charlotte, Harry became concerned about interfering with the small church already in the area. So he sent a letter back to Terry to express his concerns, writing, “I really feel like it would be inappropriate for me to come and plant a church next to this struggling congregation. What needs to happen is this church should expand its vision and really try to move ahead and be the church that Charlotte needs it to be.”

In the meantime, Terry was in communication with Christ Covenant Interim Pastor Bob Wilcox and had excited him with the story of Harry Reeder and the revitalization at Pinelands. The result was that Christ Covenant “went after Harry,” Bob recalled. “We were very aggressive.”

It was with great conviction that Bernie boarded a plane and flew up to Michigan, where the General Assembly was in Session, to meet and talk with Harry Reeder. The offer he laid before Harry seemed preposterous — in the flesh. Harry’s “opportunity” was this: to leave the healthy, well-appointed Pinelands Presbyterian Church in Miami to come to Charlotte to pastor 38 people meeting in a trailer!

CHAPTER 6

“FIRST THINGS FIRST”: THE VISION

Once again, the PCA leadership took a turn to discuss the Charlotte work with Harry. Even before Harry could return to Florida from General Assembly, MNA Coordinator Terry Gyger was engaging the young preacher in discussions, since so many were convinced Harry was hand-picked by God for the job.

Ted Spangler, one of the four-family core of Christ Covenant, recalls how the denomination labored to let Harry know how much they were going to support the work there. “Harry had a strong driving church in Florida, so they had to do a real selling job,” commented Spangler. “Because there was a strong desire to plant this Resource Church, Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama offered support for Harry in Charlotte — and committed \$25,000 a year for three years” to the work.

A BIBLICAL PARADIGM

When the Reeders next visited Charlotte, Harry was invited to stop by Christ Covenant and preach at its Sunday evening service.

As it turned out, this was a key point in the revitalization — or remaking — process for the small church. Elder Bernie Lawrence remembers this sermon well, stating that it “hit home,” addressing one of the church’s main worries: Did Christ Covenant want to be the “large” Resource Church that the denomination envisioned?

“We had been a very small group for so many years,” Bernie recalled, “that while we had given a lot of thought to what we wanted to be as a church, I think there was this sense of not wanting to lose our smallness.” And that night Harry’s sermon was from Acts 2, focusing on this very issue!

“His challenge to us from Acts 2 was not to concentrate on size, but rather to focus on faithfulness and let the Lord determine whether we would be a large church or a small church. I remember the sermon well because it crystallized for me what we needed to be giving our attention to as a church.”

That night, reading from Acts 2, Harry drew a picture for the congregation of what a Servant/Resource church should be. To summarize, when disciples, through a life of service and devotion, commit themselves to the teaching of the Word, and to fellowship, worship, and prayer — both in the large group (temple courts) and in small groups (house to house) — the result will be fruitfulness. At Christ Covenant, this text was referred to again and again as leadership sought to communicate what a Servant/Resource church looked like as it lived out its mission.

THE CALL ANSWERED

But what of Harry himself? What would he do? The Reeder had dreamed of planting a church in Charlotte one day. Nevertheless, was this the one and this the time? Cindy had already put down roots in Florida. And now an established pastor, Harry would have to take a significant cut in salary in this new position. Yet, as they talked and prayed about it, they held to a vision of the kind of a church that the Lord had long since lain upon their hearts.

Though Harry's message had served to answer the doubts and questions of the people of Christ Covenant, more research was required to convince Harry that God had given him the go-ahead. So, while the Charlotte church family was set to begin the work of a Servant/Resource church, under Harry's leadership, their would-be pastor was making visits to other pastors in the area. Those discussions would be key to his own decision-making, particularly a meeting with Ross Rhodes of Calvary Church.

"We did not want to duplicate what was going on," Harry said. "That was a significant leading of the Lord."

As he talked with these pastors, Harry realized that his approach to ministry would be different from those of any of the other churches in the area. He could complement what God was already doing, without duplicating efforts.

"Ours would be a distinctly different ministry," he determined. "Our commitment would be to small groups, expositional preaching, and a functional philosophy of Presbyterian leadership."

So the decision was made. The invitation was given. Harry Reeder and his vision had the full support of the small congregation, and Harry agreed to candidate to become their pastor!

THE MATCH IS CONFIRMED

"I was on the pulpit committee and an Elder," Bernie Lawrence recalled. "And I had a lot of dialogue with Harry. In those first conversations with him, I saw that he was very much at peace. He knew who he was — he knew his strengths and his weaknesses. And he laid them on the line for us, up front."

His strengths?

"Obviously, preaching the Word. Then add a strength in vision, in being able to lay out a picture and to draw people to that vision," Bernie explained. "As for weaknesses, he's really better at most everything than he gives himself credit for, but he thought he had a weakness as a counselor, and as an administrator. But I especially know him to be a strong administrator."

So Harry Reeder came to Christ Covenant in February of 1983. He left his "nice" sanctuary in Florida and walked into a "fixed up" trailer in Charlotte. His new job did not come with a church secretary — only an "office" which was outfitted with the basics: a telephone, a desk, a chair, three steel book shelves, and a pencil.

The family, still looking for a house to buy, moved in with Harry's sister Vicki Reeder — five more people into her three-bedroom apartment!

And on that first Sunday, it snowed! A special welcome to the Floridians!

THE BIRTH OF A CHURCH PHILOSOPHY

Despite the snow, excitement was high in the modular unit on that Sunday morning, as Harry presented to the faithful 38 members a philosophy of ministry outlined from Ephesians 4. At this time the “flagship” church was re-designated as a “Servant/ Resource” Church.

Harry told them, “My philosophy is that my calling as a pastor/teacher is first to equip the saints to do ministry, to focus on the public ministry of the Word (the preaching and teaching of the Word in other settings), and prayer. Second is the vision of Christ Covenant as a Servant/ Resource church, to cast the vision for the congregation. Third is leadership development, to encourage and to move leaders on into leadership positions, multiplying leadership. And fourth would be the Pastor's Class, working with new members of Christ Covenant — their relationship to the Lord and to Christ Covenant.”

He encouraged them, reminding them that they already possessed a very real asset in the three men who were their Elders, committed to the Lord and Christ Covenant — Bernie Lawrence, Bob Tarte, and Harry Martin, and also in the church Treasurer, Ted Spangler.

As he began to draw the picture of the years ahead, the excitement mounted.

Following that sermon, it was arranged for Harry and the Elders to go on a retreat to the beach. There was a lot to pray and talk about.

“We laid foundational statements at that time,” Bernie said. “We laid out strategies of the church, the guiding principles for the church that are still on target today.” The goal was to establish “first things first.”

Together, the leadership developed the philosophy, vision, foundation, and direction for Christ Covenant.

The group drew from Colossians 1:18, “...that in all things Christ might have the preeminence.” To this they added a statement of summary: “to glorify God by worshipping God in spirit and truth and faithfully witness to all who dwell on the earth.”

Then “What will be our commitment?” was the next question addressed. There were five principles Christ Covenant would affirm:

1. The inerrant Word of God, our only rule of faith and practice;
2. True worship, our primary concern;
3. Making disciples through evangelism of the lost and equipping believers;
4. The Westminster Standards as most faithful to Biblical Christianity;

5. The Presbyterian form of government as ordained by Scripture for the rule of Christ's Church.

At the retreat, the leadership of the church also drew up "10 Strategies" they planned to implement to accomplish their purpose.

THE FIRST ANNUAL SERMON "SERIES"

Upon their return from the retreat, Harry preached a series of sermons on "Ten Principles To Build Christ Covenant for Christ." And every year thereafter, he always included a sermon series on this philosophy and vision — the very foundation and direction of Christ Covenant. This allowed newcomers to get on board with the vision and to find their role in it.

The "10 Strategies" decided on by leadership, further detailed how Christ Covenant, by God's grace, would seek to develop the pulpit ministry, education, small groups, evangelism, missions, and general ministry:

1. To effect worship services that are regulated by God's Word for His praise and for the edification of His people.
2. To develop a pulpit ministry that accurately expounds God's Word so that hearers would be clearly challenged to examine themselves, edify the saints, and evangelize the lost.
3. To develop an educational ministry that effectively presents the Gospel, matures believers in their understanding and obedience to God's Word, and provides help for parents to bring up their covenant children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
4. To provide a discipling ministry that encourages the identification, development, and use of individual gifts in the body of Christ.
5. To develop a small group ministry for in-depth Bible study, intimate fellowship, and intercessory prayer, and that promotes obedience to God's Word.
6. To develop an evangelism ministry that equips believers with a lifestyle that effectively reflects that Gospel and saturates our local communities.
7. To develop a missions program that encourages the Lord's people to go to the ends of the earth in spreading the Gospel as well as faithfully providing prayerful, financial, and personal support to those who are sent.
8. To develop ministries of mercy first of all within the household of faith and then to the truly poor and needy in the community.
9. To develop a ministry to the youth that Biblically meets their spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, and recreational needs.
10. To develop a ministry that compassionately supports the elderly and involves them in the life and ministry of the body of Christ.

Goals for the year ahead were set, the baton they could take and "run with." And when Harry presented these to the church in his sermons, "run" they did! Within

just three months of Harry's arrival, the congregation outgrew the modular unit — the 38 quickly became 100 plus!

CHAPTER 7

A NEW DAY

When Harry Reeder came to Christ Covenant in February 1983, he gave it new life and purpose. Whether the work qualified as church “replanting,” or a “revitalization,” it was a new day, and things began to happen. The 38 who were faithful to this new work caught the vision he brought and, in three short months, the congregation mushroomed — tripling in size — and overcrowding the Alexander Road facility.

PULPIT MINISTRY LEADS TO GROWTH

What was responsible for this sudden growth? In short, it was vision and teaching. In those early months, the visionary leadership of the pastor and Elders led to the establishment of the organizing principles that still guide the church today. The church vision was clearly communicated to all who came. It was a powerful vision that served to anchor the church and to attract new worshippers. It was, however, the dynamic, expository preaching of the Word at Christ Covenant that produced disciples willing to labor, to shepherd, and to pray as God revealed His will for the people of Christ Covenant. Indeed, there was something new happening in southeast Charlotte!

“Harry is extremely gifted in the pulpit,” Bernie Lawrence explained it, “and his distinction, in terms of theology, was in the reformed faith, Bible based. People were just hungry for that.”

For example, there is the story of Bob Pappenroth, Sr. and his wife Rose.

“We had moved down here from a Christian Reformed Church in New York, and for several years we actively searched for a church home here in Charlotte,” Bob recalled. “We hit a lot of churches before we heard of Christ Covenant. It was our son — he and his wife were attending — and he said, ‘Dad, this is really a great church. You’ve got to come and listen.’ We came and heard Harry’s preaching and found what we had been looking for. I think the rapid growth of Christ Covenant was largely due to Harry’s preaching.”

Mike Terrell, one of church founders said, “It seemed that the bigger we got the more comfortable people felt about coming. We had several people tell us that when they first drove up and saw only four to five cars in the lot, they thought, ‘This is too small for me,’ and they moved on.”

Now the parking lot was overflowing.

If the preaching/teaching of the Word brought them in the door, what held them? Why did they stay to join the young church?

“EQUIPPING THE SAINTS”

In the tradition of reformed theology, Harry stressed evangelism and leadership training. He often spoke of “equipping the saints.” And in regard to church growth, even from the beginning, Harry taught three consecutive dynamics: spiritual growth, functional growth, and then statistical growth, but there was no mention of numerical goals.

“What we did was set spiritual and functional goals for what we would like to accomplish as a church. We just let the Lord deal with the numbers issue,” commented Harry. These measurable function goals included such efforts as church planting, an aggressive missions program, an education and youth ministry, discipleship and evangelism, small groups, and balanced, God-centered worship services.

Within a short time, the church ministries began to reflect these emphases. In the adult Sunday Bible school program, classes followed these themes, and the first Pastor’s Class was initiated. The children’s Sunday school flourished. And a new program was started that had a tremendous impact on the life of the congregation and the church as a whole — the Small Group Ministry.

THE COMING OF SMALL GROUPS: K&GF

In addition to his preaching, teaching, and prayer ministry, Harry immediately began developing leadership within the church via the Small Group Ministry. He led the very first small group, which consisted of four families. These committed themselves to a 13-week training program, under the pastor’s leadership, after which each couple would go and start another small group. At this time, these groups were called “Knowing & Growing Fellowships.”

Bob Pappenroth called the small groups “a real blessing.” Bob and Rose hosted one of the first generations of small groups. He expressed what many of the participants were also feeling. “This was something new to us,” he said. “We were not used to a small group like this, and it made a strong impression on us. We enjoyed it very much. There were five couples in our group in the beginning and, by the following year, we had grown to eight couples — about as large as a small group should get.

“People brought their kids — I remember working out the baby sitting. We sang some songs, but it was mostly Bible study. Bernie Lawrence was our facilitator. He was a Navigator, and he used the Navigator Series as a source. We met once a week, and there were refreshments afterwards — people took turns bringing something. It was a real good time of fellowship and blessing. You really did draw close to one another, and lasting friendships were made.”

By the end of 1983, there were five Knowing & Growing Fellowships: Cotswold, hosted by Rick and Terry Jacobs with Ed Ouimette, facilitator; Bob and Rose Pappenroth’s Mint Hill group, Bernie Lawrence, facilitator; Alexander K&FG, hosted by various choir members with facilitator, John Royster; South Park, hosted by Ted and Letha Spangler, Harry Martin, facilitator; and Eastland with Mike and Jenny Terrell, Mike facilitating.

The purpose of the K&GF was to provide a discipling small group Bible study where teaching, dialogue, and close relationships promoted in-depth Bible study, intimate fellowship, and intercessory prayer. From these groups, many developed deductive Bible study habits.

“Relationships and prayer lives were noticeably benefited,” Harry recalled, “and new believers had a good environment to begin their adventure of growing in Christ. By God’s grace, we saw the purposes of these groups walked out and impacting whole families.”

Unquestionably, the Small Group Ministry made deep impressions upon lives, and, as the church grew, became even more important in helping members get — and stay — connected.

Long-time member Kimberlie Carrick tells of one small group that even after they were scattered — two to the mission field, one to youth ministry, one to the choir fellowship, and two to other close-by fellowships — they still met for dinner once a month.

“Small groups are extremely important,” Kimberlie stressed, “especially as a church grows larger.”

The Knowing & Growing Fellowships not only nurtured friendships and allowed for one-on-one ministry, they proved to be valuable training grounds for developing disciples and also for evangelism. Elder Dick Osman later made this point in the forward of his *Manual for Small Groups*, which he developed specifically for his Sunday morning small group facilitator training class.

FISHERMAN BIBLE FELLOWSHIPS

Just after Harry Reeder's arrival at Christ Covenant, still another ministry with a leadership focus was expanded. An early morning discipleship class augmented the existing Evangelism Explosion (EE) program for men. The first Fisherman Bible Fellowship (FBF) quickly grew to two: one meeting at the Wachovia Bank Building that Mike Terrell organized with Duke Power employees; and one of Southern Bell workers, coordinated by Harry Martin.

In time, six to eight FBF groups met in homes, later evolving into Knowing & Growing Fellowships.

THE MAKING OF CHURCH LEADERS

Christ Covenant's leadership emphasis was central to every ministry area and foundational to future church growth. There was discipleship training for facilitators; leadership training for Elders and Deacons; the Lifestyle Evangelism and Discipleship (LEAD) programs in which "new believers were nurtured in the Word"; and there was training in how to share Christ, including how to identify spiritual gifts to use in ministry "for the cause of the Gospel."

Dedicated young leaders, anxious to be about the business of extending the Kingdom, found an oasis of learning and serving at Christ Covenant.

Harry Reeder acknowledged the rapid growth of Christ Covenant during that first year after his arrival. "There was a hunger for the Word of God," he commented. "We were filling a need for expository preaching, and people were responding to the Small Group Ministry. There was a real spirit of openness to new people when they came — a real heart for people. There was a genuine desire to reach people for Christ, and the Lord was honoring that."

MINISTRY PROGRAMS GET THEIR START

The choir was growing and feeling the strain of overcrowding. Jo Miller, Director of the Music Ministry, recalled how on Sunday mornings the choir "warmed up" in a second mobile unit that was purchased for Sunday school classes, then walked outside — in all types of weather — across to the sanctuary unit for the service. Despite its many obstacles, the choir, 21-voices strong, performed their first Christmas Cantata, "Come To The Manger," in the Alexander Road mobile unit.

Many significant programs had their beginning in those first months of Christ Covenant's new day. With hearts of compassion, Chip and Brenda Trigg headed up The Barnabas Ministry, a new ministry to assist those in need. Even in the early planning stage of its development, families had physical, emotional and spiritual needs met there. Day to day needs such as fuel, food, and rent were provided, along with encouragement and advice in such areas as financial planning and job-hunting.

A myriad of ministries recorded their beginnings during this time. Shepherding

Groups were organized by Elder Bob Tarte; A restocked Singles Ministry was headed up by Rick and Chery Locke; *The Courier* newsletter hit the press, edited by Vicki Sweeten; on the airwaves, the nationwide Radio Ministry had its beginnings, managed by John and Stelle Snyder; Pulpit audio tapes became available, thanks to Larry Cothorn; and the Welcome Our Visitors Committee was coordinated by Letha Spangler.

Meanwhile, the women at Christ Covenant were busy finding creative ways to provide ministry. The Women in the Church (WIC) ministry served as the umbrella organization for a number of programs in which women used their spiritual gifts to impact lives for Christ. At its inception, WIC was led by Vicki Reeder and Pat Lawrence; Vice Presidents were Beverly Mosbacker and Marsha Metts. Terry Tarte was Secretary-Treasurer; Kathy Tulp, Historian. There were two daytime Bible studies for women and a “circle” meeting one evening a month. Committees were formed for various projects: goodie boxes for college students; meals for families in crisis; covered dish dinners, receptions, and the first Thanksgiving Praise Service breakfast. With faithfulness, women made arrangements for guest speakers to the church — housing, meals, and transportation; they organized a flowers and card ministry; and they took on special projects — the making of the Chrismon tree decorations, for example.

Other chairpersons and officers of WIC during 1983-84 were Letha Spangler, Debbie Royster, Nancy Gill, Vicki Sweeten, Marni Halvorson, Brenda Trigg, April Stollmack, Susan Underwood, Mary Martin, Jody Burlkey, Amy Reeder, Jane Elliott, and Elaine Cothorn.

Youth Ministries reflected the growth — and demographics — of the young church. Hugh and Lisa Elder were the first to accept the challenge of developing and overseeing programs for various age groups. Youth met with the Elders weekly for Vine Fellowship, with Andy and Kathy Pickens assisting. In addition, there was a Great Fall Getaway; sleep-in; Bible study; and a puppet ministry, referred to as “Witnesstime Productions,” used to add interest to children’s Bible teaching and missions education.

At Christ Covenant, “enfolding” was a term folks became familiar with as they found their own place and, in turn, helped others feel at home in this body of believers. The area of Enfolding Ministries benefited from the able leadership of Bernie Lawrence.

The style, quality, and direction of the music that was so integral to the church’s ministry approach fell under the Ministry of Exhortation. Bob Tarte, with Music Director Jo Miller, coordinated this key area. Jo’s philosophy of music emphasized the goal of worship in music. First, she sought to continually remind worshippers that God is the One to whom they raise their voices; also, she held strongly to the perspective that “the music ministry must always enhance the preached Word.”

A CHURCH SERVICE FOR THE CHILDREN

A minister's wife serves in many ways — last minute substituting when a Sunday school teacher needs to be away or taking on the many tasks in the church office until a permanent position can be filled. But this minister's wife, Cindy, made it her ultimate goal to discover the niche God had planned for her. For Cindy, need and passion met in the organizing of a Sunday morning "church" for small children.

When Cindy Reeder first came to Christ Covenant with her pastor husband, she found many opportunities waiting.

"I was Harry's secretary for the first two or three months," she said. "But we knew that doesn't work, so that's the first thing we looked for — someone to run the office."

So April Stallmack came, and later Debbie Royster and Sherry Lott, to manage the church office. Meanwhile, Cindy sang in the choir, taught Sunday school, took part in leadership of Women In the Church, but when she started the Youth Church, she knew she had found her place.

Youth Church met during the "regular" worship service, and was geared for pre-schoolers, later expanding to include kindergartners through second grade.

By design, Youth Church was unlike Sunday school. In fact, it was patterned after the adult worship service. A song leader, accompanied by guitar or piano, led the children in a time of praise. This was followed by prayer time and a brief sermon prepared for little ears and energetic bodies. Typically, the fathers of the children would rotate this responsibility. Cindy wanted the children to feel as though this worship time was truly "theirs," with its own distinctive quality and its own worship leaders.

Then Cindy organized and directed a Children's Choir, which included their own three children — Jennifer, Ike, and Abby. Yes, Cindy had found her place, and she stayed with the Youth Church as it grew and flourished.

That first Annual Report of Christ Covenant, dated 1983-84, was 50 pages in length, brimming with the inspiration and innovation of 24 new ministries and opportunities for service — as well as realistic plans for the future.

The congregation's young leaders, still in training, caught the vision. With anticipation, they looked to the years ahead and committed themselves wholeheartedly to the work of fulfilling Christ Covenant's call.

And the developmental years began.

CHAPTER 8

BACK TO SCHOOL: The Years at Charlotte Christian School

In the four short months following Pastor Harry Reeder's first sermon to the 38 members of Christ Covenant Church, the congregation outgrew the modular unit on Alexander Road.

"Now there were probably between 85 and 100 people attending," Elder Bernie Lawrence recalled. "When we first designed and bought the unit, we figured we could literally squeeze 100 people in there — that was with everybody inhaling," he laughed. "So by the time we hit 85, it was beginning to get uncomfortable."

A MOVE IS MADE

"What do we do now? Where do we go from here?" The questions facing leadership were difficult, and time was short. Clearly, the Alexander Road property was too small and too confining for what the Lord had in mind for Christ Covenant. So, while vacant land was sought, the search began for a meeting place that would immediately accommodate the rapidly growing church. Soon an agreement was made with Charlotte Christian School, a few miles away on Sardis Road.

These were years of rapid change.

In June of 1983, the move was made, first to the school's chapel room, then to its larger multi-purpose room. And by the fall of that year it was evident that even more space would be required.

For a time, Pastor Harry's office was maintained in the modular unit. It was then that seminary graduate Edward Ouimette, 36, came to help as Assistant Pastor. At Christ Covenant, Edward was able to fulfill his one-year internship requirement to become a PCA Pastor/Teacher. He took over the role as ministry director for the Knowing & Growing Fellowships and other duties as assigned, including visitations, assisting at the morning worship services, and preaching when Harry was out of town. A year later, he was called to serve at a church in Albemarle.

FIRST DEACONS ORDAINED

Opportunities to see God moving the church forward were evident almost on a daily basis. On a Sunday evening in January of 1984, Christ Covenant's first

Deacons were ordained and installed. They were Hugh Elder, Chairman; Mike Terrell, Secretary; Larry Cothorn, Ed Sweeten, John Royster, and Henry (Chip) Trigg.

Meanwhile, the Administration and Pastoral offices were moved to the second floor of a building situated in a Matthews office park, next to what was, at that time, the Harris Teeter Headquarters.

The modular unit on Alexander Road was sold to a church for the intention of planting a new fellowship. Likewise, the proceeds from this sale helped Christ Covenant start a new PCA church in Harrisburg — Grace Presbyterian Church. Then, in God's perfect timing, the 3.79 acres of land was sold and the money placed in a special fund for future development. All of these changes occurred in a single summer — the summer of 1983, as the church sought to find its "home."

Again the questions plagued leadership. Where can we go to meet the pressing need for space on Sunday mornings, yet maintain the sanctity of a place of worship?

SUNDAY MORNING SET-UPS

This would take some serious brainstorming. A Sanctuary Relocation Committee was formed with Ed Wright as Chairman. A reasonable — though challenging — solution was determined, and it was agreed that the congregation would continue to expand on the campus of Charlotte Christian School. It then became the awesome responsibility of the committee to manage the details of "relocating our present sanctuary to the gymnasium of Charlotte Christian School to accommodate our current growth trend temporarily until such time that we locate land and begin building a permanent sanctuary, and to provide the appropriate atmosphere of worship in order to give our Lord all praise, honor, and glory during worship services."

Mike Terrell, who had been with Christ Covenant since its earliest days and had seen move after move made, said, "We were scared to death to move into the gym because it was so big. We even bought this huge, heavy blue curtain and partitioned off half the gym so we wouldn't get lost in it."

On February 5, 1984, the move was made.

But that curtain was short-lived, since it was only months before the congregation filled the gymnasium! The years of setting up the gym each Saturday night and taking it down again every Sunday night were in full swing.

Stelle Snyder, who arrived in 1980, remembers when the curtain was no longer needed. She also remembers the half dozen experiments with seating arrangements attempted in order to make use of every square foot of space. Chairs were set up the length of the gym, then the width of the gym sideways, then in curves. No configuration would, ultimately, meet the ongoing need for more space.

"It was like the children of Israel when they were in the wilderness," Mike Terrell

said. "Every Saturday we would unfold a couple hundred chairs, then hang the curtain backdrops, set up the sound equipment and the elevated platform (which was in four, 4x8-foot sections). Carpeting was laid down on the platform, the aisles, and at the entrance."

Coordinating this weekly transformation was Chris Mapes. Together he worked with the men of the church who willingly rotated duties to produce an acceptable place of worship. Even as chairs went up and down, choir director Jo Miller and her husband hauled hymnals and musical scores from their car, back and forth each Saturday and Sunday. The piano, however, was left in the corner of the gymnasium. Since it needed to be protected during the week from enthusiastic school children, Mike Terrell and Harry Martin built a box for the piano! Stelle Snyder always referred to this time as "church in a box."

"We really learned to work together." Stelle added. "I believe the thing that marks Christ Covenant, that is so important to our congregation, is our spirit of unity. It's so 'us'. We've just never had division grow up. And that's what keeps us healthy, keeps us going."

As if the process of turning the gymnasium into a sanctuary each weekend wasn't overwhelming enough, the weekly transformation was made even more complex by the need to also create "Sunday school" rooms for various age levels.

In all, it required four teams to pull off this effort. The Worship Coordinator, John Gordon, organized these teams, which were headed by Mike Terrell, Frank Underwood, Ed Sweeten, and Buzz Wooten.

Desks were pushed aside and chairs set up in room after room. In the "nurseries," cribs and playpens were brought in. For the toddlers, toys were added. There were three adult classes, then four, and finally six that year. Soon there were seven youth classes. John and Debbie Royster tried to keep ahead of this rapid growth as they led the Sunday Bible School Ministry.

With Charlotte Christian School's permission, a storage shed was erected behind the building, and these Sunday furnishings were "stuffed into it" each week.

DAWN COMES

Even as the church worked to meet its weekly physical needs, men and women at Christ Covenant were also feeling challenged in their spiritual lives. There was a growing excitement about the things of God, as evidenced by an increased interest in the study of God's Word. For instance, Barrett Mosbacker came to Pastor Harry with questions on the principles of Biblical interpretation. As their discussions progressed, some of the other men asked if they could join in that learning time. Thus began a weekly study that was opened to all men of Christ Covenant and their friends. It was called DAWN, an acronym for Discipleship and Weekly Nurture. In time, 18 to 22 men were meeting together on Tuesday morning for study, breakfast and fellowship. But still others wanted to participate. Eventually there were four such groups meeting throughout the week, including

one co-ed group.

THE SEARCH FOR LAND

At the Session meeting of February 1983, a Ministry Expansion Committee was formed, chaired by John Royster. Its stated purpose was to locate 15 to 20 acres of land, if possible, within a three to five mile radius of the intersection of State Highways 51 and 16 (Providence Road).

“We were looking for vacant property,” Mike Terrell said. “It needed to be on a major corridor. We didn’t want to be a neighborhood church because we didn’t want to be a burden to a neighborhood with the size and traffic problems.”

There was, in fact, acreage at the corner of 51 and Alexander Road — 38 acres at \$13,500 an acre, but negotiations broke down, and efforts to find an alternative there failed to materialize.

The committee had heard of a second tract of land that met all the requirements, 31 acres on Highway 51 between Sardis Road and John Street in Matthews, but the parcel was optioned to another buyer, and — even then — the asking price was “way beyond us.” So the committee kept searching. But as they looked, their thoughts kept returning to this 31 acres — the Funderburk property.

Pastor Reeder recounted the exciting story: “Then one of our Deacons, Mike Terrell, suggested that the Elders and Deacons spend a special time in prayer and fasting concerning this property.

“We did,” as Harry summed up, “and two weeks later we were signing the contract for this land at a price we could meet! This was the tract that the Lord wanted us to have. He made it available in really miraculous ways.”

As John Snyder wrote in the Annual report, “1984 will always be remembered in the life of the church as the year we found the land which the Lord had saved for us. We praise Him for the evidence of His specific intervention in this purchase and His provision of funds and people to make it possible.”

CONFERENCES BEGIN

Larger group focuses on The Word, Christian Living, and Missions marked 1984 at Christ Covenant as it introduced a number of “Conference Ministries.” These were times of special emphasis on topics and concerns that leadership believed were churchwide in nature. These events were still another aspect of extending the Kingdom of God as outlined in the church’s early vision statements. 1984 was the first complete year of Conference Ministries. The Discipleship Conference was held that year, as was the first Mission Conference with Walford Thompson, President of Ministries in Action, focusing on the Caribbean.

From the beginning there was a strong missions ministry as the Knowing & Growing Fellowships “adopted” missionaries and helped support 12 missionaries in 10 countries on five continents. Joanne Sato served as Missions Coordinator

with committee members Dennis and Pat Carter, Jane Elliott, Chip and Brenda Trigg, Evelyn Ribbi, and Steve and Karen Fox. Later, several of these committee members were to make decisions to go into the mission field themselves.

A NEW PROBLEM ARISES

A year earlier, there was a 224% growth in church attendance. However, the challenge had been met with a move into the school's gymnasium; there was no seating problem. By 1984, however, the problem was parking. The school parking lot could not accommodate all the cars!

GOALS FOR 1984

Yet matters of ministry — not parking — topped Christ Covenant's "Goals for 1984." The church leadership boldly listed 24 areas they believed God would have them give concentrated focus and effort in the coming year. Clearly a priority, by necessity, the list indicated the need to initiate a building master plan — once the land site was secured. Other focuses included adding an assistant pastor; completing the move of the "worship center" to the gymnasium of Charlotte Christian and create a worshipful atmosphere; finding lay Coordinators for the LEAD (Lifestyle Evangelism and Discipleship) Ministry and the Knowing & Growing Fellowships; adding two Fisherman Bible Studies to increase the total number to five; starting the Barnabas Ministry from the approved proposal; increasing the Knowing & Growing Fellowship groups by 10 to a total of 15; developing a ministry to and for the elderly; planning for an attendance of 350 in the morning worship service; establishing a 1985 budget goal of \$285,000; providing adequate office space and office equipment; organizing a functioning senior high youth group with leaders; initiating a Faith Promise Giving Program in the church for missions; accumulating \$100,000 in the building and land fund for the purchase of the land; and finally, adding three ruling Elders and six Deacons. Many of these goals were quickly met.