

Volume 5, Number 25 • 36 Pages

OCTOBER 10, 2002

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Statesville, NC 28677 • 50¢

Published Weekly in the Crossroads of the Carolinas

Water Worries Take Baptists...

## Back to the River



COME ON IN! Dr. Jeff Porter, minister of First Baptist Church, beckons the next person for baptism. Jody Parlier helps Jill West back to shore. Her smile shows the water is fine.

Neil Furr  
IREDELL CITIZEN

TEN BROTHERS AND SISTERS, mothers and fathers, all in white robes, stand in the warm September sun, awaiting their call into Lake Norman. When Rev. Jeff Porter stretches out his hand, the supplicants, singly or in family

groups, swish into the water.

Their fellow members from First Baptist Church in Statesville provide musical and prayer support from the river bank. Most have never witnessed an outside baptism and are used to indoor plumbing, as it were.

But here they are, gathered at Willow Point on Lake Norman for a baptizing where the whole world can see, if it wants. Although the day is sunny, powerboats and jet skis are blessedly absent and the hymns and prayers drift out across the deep.

Were it not for water restrictions

in town, the church members wouldn't be here. Although Stage III restrictions say nothing about indoor baptisms, church members felt it wrong, somehow, to fill the big baptistry while the

**See Back to the River  
page 18**