

Catholic prayer group furthers charismatic movement in Chapel Hill area

By **MATTHEW FURY**
Staff Writer

The religious charismatic movement is growing in the Chapel Hill area, largely through the efforts of a Catholic charismatic renewal prayer group at the Newman-Catholic Student Center.

The movement attracts people who believe one can manifest gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as being able to speak in tongues. In 1977, there were one million charismatics in the nation, according to *The New York Times*. Membership in the local prayer group has nearly doubled since it began in 1981.

"A charismatic is someone who believes that the power and the gifts that were available to the apostles at Pentecost are still available today," said Mary Jo Pelland, prayer group leader and instructor of occupational therapy in the medical allied health professions department. Pentecost, the seventh Sunday after Easter, celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles of Jesus.

The Biblical foundation of charismatic gifts comes from 1 Corinthians 12 and 14.

"Peter's message is that there are many different gifts that Christians can manifest, but they all have one source," said John Schutz, professor in the religious studies department. This source is the Holy Spirit, he added.

The charismatic gifts, or charismata, include prophecy and speaking in

tongues. The gift of tongues is manifested by excited and unintelligible speech caused by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

"What Peter had in mind was a speaking in gibberish," Schutz said. "Someone else who had the power of interpretation could understand it." Such interpretation can be an instance of prophecy.

Pelland said she regarded the gifts of tongues and prophecy as "glamorous." The charismata, she said, also included many "service-oriented gifts," such as teaching and administration. The weekly prayer group meetings feature what Pelland describes as "a time of singing and spontaneously offering words of prayer and thanksgiving and the exercise of spiritual gifts." The final phase of a meeting, which lasts about one and one half hours, includes teaching and group prayer.

Faculty, students and Chapel Hill residents participate in the group. It has 30 members, slightly above average for a charismatic prayer group. The group welcomed new members to its Life-in-the-Spirit seminar at the Newman Center Oct. 1.

"We don't have a set goal on numbers," Pelland said. "We are willing to help as many people as God lets us."

"The purpose of the charismatic movement is to renew spiritual commitment to the Church," she said. In September, the group presented an introductory seminar at the Catholic

Church of St. Thomas More about charismatic renewal.

Charismatics, Sue Beck said, "are very much at the heart of the Catholic Church." Beck is a leader of the Chapel Hill prayer group and an assistant professor of medical technology.

The Catholic charismatics annually hold a national conference on Memorial Day weekend. More than 10,000 people traditionally attend this function in South Bend, Ind.

But the charismatic movement is not restricted to Catholics.

"It is not odd for a prayer group to

be ecumenical," Beck said. "We have a few people in our prayer group who are not Roman Catholics." These people are interested in the charismatic movement, but no charismatic prayer groups are affiliated with their own area churches.

Charismatic prayer groups should not be confused with the Pentecostal churches formed at the turn of the century. The Pentecostal churches disagree with the newer prayer groups in several respects.

Both groups believe in the charismata. But some prayer groups, said the

Rev. R.A. King of the Carrboro Church of God, "put too much influence on the charismatic gifts and not enough emphasis on Jesus Christ." The charismatic groups often show more respect for their leaders than for Christ, he said.

His Pentecostal church does not espouse the idea of praying for the gifts. It is impossible for one person to teach another how to attain the gifts, he said. The charismatics seem to be saying, "All right Lord, it's my turn now. Let me speak in tongues. Let me perform a miracle," he said.

In the 1960s, members from the

Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist and other churches formed the newer charismatic prayer groups, which are not separate churches.

The National Charismatic Conference, held every 10 years in Kansas City, Mo., demonstrate this ecumenical nature. Fifty thousand Christian charismatics attended the last conference in 1977 at Arrowhead Stadium. Another conference will be held in 1987.

"The charismatic movement," Pelland said, "transcends Christian denominations."

Study says high educational level in Chapel Hill area boosts rate of seatbelt use to highest level in state

By **BETH OWNLEY**
Staff Writer

About 70 percent of Chapel Hill-Carrboro motorists buckled up during the first week North Carolina's new seatbelt law was in effect, according to UNC Highway Safety Research.

From Oct. 1 through Oct. 5, highway safety researchers monitored drivers at seven area sites. According to Director B.J. Campbell, 2,352 drivers wore seatbelts.

Chapel Hill and Carrboro have shown the highest seatbelt use rate in the state for the past several months. The previous highest seatbelt use rate for Chapel Hill-Carrboro was 52 percent in August, up 8 percent from May.

The area's high seatbelt use rate is attributed to Chapel Hill and Carrboro's "higher educational level," said Bill Hall of the Highway Safety Research Center. Research has shown a high educational level is related to seatbelt use, he said.

UNC researchers began monitoring seatbelt use in Chapel Hill and Carrboro in 1983 as part of an incentive program called "Seat Belts Pay Off." The program offered area motorists the chance to win spot prizes at seatbelt checkpoints. Motorists then were eligible for monthly drawings of \$500. After the program began, seatbelt use increased from 24 percent to 41 percent.


Highway safety researchers continued to monitor area drivers in 1984 by staking out a combination of

85 sites weekly. This year sites are monitored once or twice monthly.

In a separate study, UNC researchers are monitoring seatbelt use among drivers statewide. Hall said a random sample of about 72 locations around the state were being monitored. The first statistics produced by the study showed almost three out of every four drivers were not wearing seatbelts during the 23 days before the law became effective.

Hall said researchers monitored seatbelt use by standing at an intersection to see if front-seat passengers were wearing seatbelts. The law requires most drivers and front-seat passengers in vehicles originally equipped with seatbelts to use the belts.

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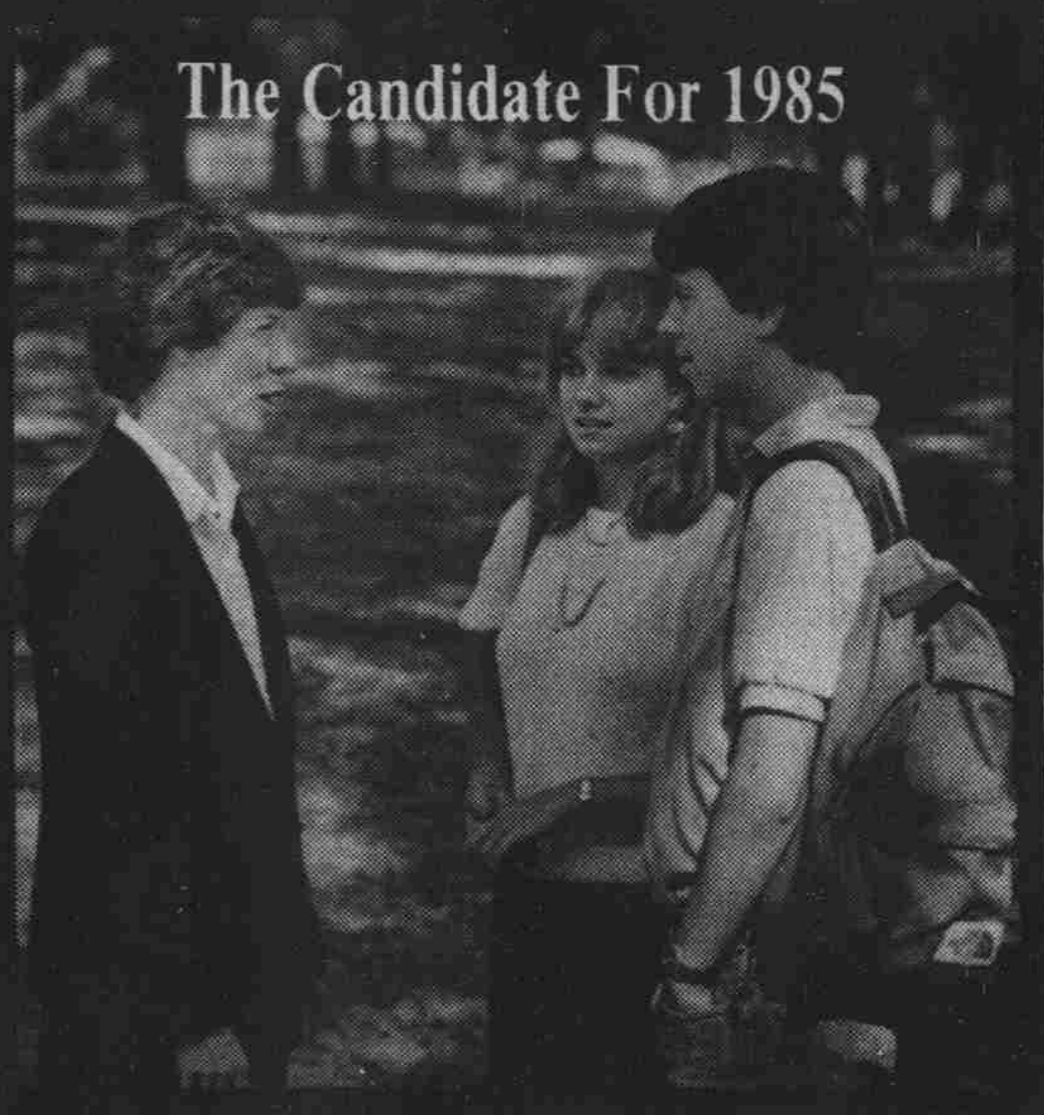
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