

PLYLER

From Page 1-A

Romans 12 is also a favorite passage and Plyler preached Romans 12 as the text for his first sermon as a young man just out of Gardner-Webb and Carson Newman colleges.

"I was scared to death and I had practiced and practiced in front of our pine trees for weeks and thought I had my sermon in 20 minutes," said Plyler. He preached and the sermon only lasted seven minutes, he said. So, he stated over again.

Paul's words Plyler will never forget. "I encourage you to present yourselves a living sacrifice for the betterment of the Kingdom."

On his arrival at the Kings Mountain church, Plyler said he read the minutes and church history and found to his surprise that his great-grandfather Sylvanus Head founded First Baptist Church of Gastonia and served on that Presbytery as moderator when Patterson Grove was accepted by the Kings Mountain Baptist Association in 1885.

This is the 110th year of the church which was organized November 15, 1884.

It was during his pastorate here that Plyler baptized his parents, Robert Ervin and Nelle Regis Kimbro Plyler, both of whom are buried in the church cemetery, and baptized his children.

One of the gifts the church gave him he said he would never forget. They allowed his wife to be herself, a homemaker, although Mrs. Plyler was always active in the children's department, choir, and Sunday School.

The church also allowed his three children to grow up without the pressure attached to preacher's kids, he said. His children are Richard Glenn Plyler, a band director at Burns High School, Charles Martin Plyler, who is assistant supervisor in the camera and plate making department at the Charlotte Observer; and Mary Katherine Plyler, music consultant at Pearson Music Company in Durham. The pride and joy of the family, of course, are the two granddaughters, Lorrin, 5, and Laurel, 3 and there are pictures of the pretty girls all over the house.

Plyler said he was called to preach at the age of 20 after he became a Christian. He said he had never gone to church and it was at North Carolina State University, where he started a career in electrical engineering, that he heard the call to preach. He said he put off his decision for about 18 months but joined Temple Baptist Church in Gastonia in 1953 and gave his life to God. While a student at Gardner Webb, he was interim pastor at First Baptist Church in High Shoals and graduated from Carson Newman college where he met the love of his life, his wife, Mary Elizabeth Webb of Goodlettsville, Tn.. He served Wise Baptist Church in Virginia and Mt. Beulah in Dallas and then accepted a call to Kings Mountain.

During his pastorate here, he returned to Southeastern Seminary at Wake Forest and earned his Master of Divinity degree in 1970. Mrs. Plyler taught fourth grade at North school for 15 years and has been media specialist at Bethware School for 14 years. She returned to Winthrop University for her Master's degree.

Patterson Grove built a new sanctuary, paid for an educational building and also remodeled it, and the Plylers lived in the parsonage for 18 years.

As a trustee of Gardner-Webb University, Plyler took his first vacation in years at a retreat recently at Myrtle Beach. For the first time ever, he didn't have to punch a clock and call home for his messages.

Ministers make personal sacrifices like all people dedicated to their labors, said Plyler.

He agrees with pastors who decide to own their own homes instead of occupying church manses.

Plyler, who will be 61 in July, said he would have found himself with no equity had he decided to

live in the church manse until he formally retired.

He estimated that it takes a pastor about seven years to build a solid relationship with his church members.

But, he says, sometimes a pastor's hands are tied if the people don't like him.

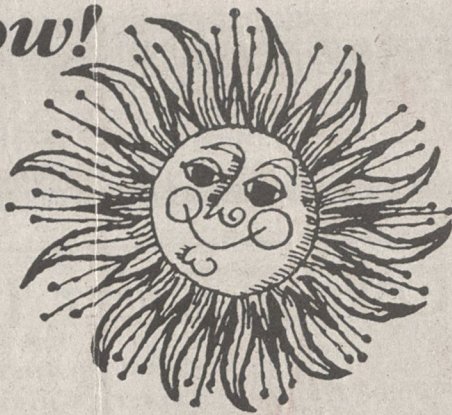
Plyler said the church staff has grown over the years, along with membership and budget. A full time secretary, a full time minister of music, an organist and pianist, a ministry assistant and a custodian make up the staff.

Plyler has pastored a whole generation of people who wrote him letters of appreciation that he treasures in a memory book. Kids are named after him and already he has married many of the children of longtime members in the church.

He counts his blessings every day, he says. Life has been good for the Gaston County native who found his Christian roots in a rural setting and plans to remain there in retirement.

It will be a period of adjustment from the pulpit to the pew but he thinks he can handle another challenge.

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