

KM helps prepare Bryan Olson for ministry

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Some folks are called by God after a dramatic or traumatic experience.

For others, the call is gradual. In the case of Wisconsin native Bryan Olson, who has lived the past 3 1/2 years in Kings Mountain as an assistant baseball administrator, it was the latter.

Olson, 26, recently left professional baseball to accept a call into the ministry. He will report to United Theological Seminary in Brighton, MN in early September to begin work on his ministry degree and ordination in the United Church of Christ.

Olson said he



BRYAN OLSON

began feeling the call as a high school freshman, and on several occasions he talked to ministers about it. They advised him, that if there was any other career he was considering to pursue those first.

He graduated from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, where he studied political science and communications. He thought he wanted to go to law school and work for a congressman, but he did a four-month internship for Congressman Scott Klug of Wisconsin in 1995 and decided that would not be his chosen profession.

He had always had a love for sports, particularly baseball, and was happy to get an opportunity in 1998 to work as an office assistant for South Atlantic League President John Henry Moss of Kings Mountain.

He now knows that God had a hand in that opportunity, and he's thankful for it.

"I thank God that he brought me down here to work with John Henry Moss and the South Atlantic League," Olson said. "That opened my eyes and gave me an opportunity to work in baseball and to get experience in minor league baseball, especially the administrative aspect of it."

He found baseball interesting - especially the people - but that call to the ministry kept coming back.

"I knew at the end of last baseball season that it

wasn't what I was being called to do," he said. "Obviously, this is something that is not a bolt of lightning or a rash decision, but it's something I feel God has been calling me to do."

Olson has worked since last November with the Charlotte Knights.

While living in Kings Mountain, Olson attended St. Matthew's Lutheran Church. He said the people there always made him feel a part of the congregation even though he was not raised a Lutheran.

"They really lifted my spirits and helped me gain confidence in myself, and the fact that I could teach the Word," he said.

Rev. Edgar Cooper, a retired Lutheran minister, encouraged Olson to be his assistant teacher in the Adult Sunday School Class.

"I taught with him in the adult class about 2 1/2 years," Olson noted, "and it's given me a great opportunity to be able to worship with the people at St. Matthews and to be around them and commune with them. They're the ones who helped me see and open my eyes that the ministry is where I need to be."

"I am not from a Lutheran background. I grew up in the United Church of Christ and that's why I've chosen to be ordained by the United Church of Christ. But I fully enjoyed being a part of St. Matthews and I feel that my ministry will be open to all people no matter what denomination. I hope they will feel just as comfortable in my

parish as I felt comfortable in theirs."

Olson's seminary commitment will be four years, including three in studies and two separate six-months internship - one with an institution such as an assisted living center, and the other serving in a congregation under the supervision of an ordained minister.

Olson said he would eventually like to serve a small congregation but, again, that will depend on what kind of call he receives.

"I need to listen and accept it wherever it leads me," he said, "whether it's an assistant in a larger congregation or a head pastor in a smaller congregation. There's a great need for pastors right now in many different areas. Sometimes the need - even though you may not be ready to be out on your own - may be to help a congregation through a transition time or to begin a new experience in a new transition."

Wherever that call leads him, Olson said he would love to come back to Kings Mountain some day and preach a sermon in the pulpit at St. Matthew's Lutheran.

"I just really enjoyed St. Matthew's and the community of Kings Mountain," he said. "I grew up in Wisconsin and had never lived in a small town before. But just living in a close knit community like Kings Mountain was great. I got to know a lot of the people here. It's a family-friendly city that is very open and accepting to newcomers, and I appreciate that."

CHURCH BRIEFS

First Baptist Church

■ A Senior Adult retreat is planned for Myrtle Beach September 24-27.

■ A High School students "Mind of Christ" Bible Study begins Tuesday, August 14 at 7 p.m. Books are \$12.

■ The 12-week "Mind of Christ" Bible Study will be offered to the Women of the Church beginning Tuesday,

August 21 and Thursday, August 23 at 9:30 a.m. A joint introductory session will be held on August 14 at 7 p.m. June Lee will facilitate the study at her home. Sign up at the Welcome Center.

■ Deacon election is Sunday, August 12. Candidates are Reg Alexander, David Allen, Phil Bryson, Jim Champion, Tim Davis, Dick Fisher, Steve Harmon, Travis Johnson, Terry

Wampler, Joe Williams, Bill Wilson and Ronnie Wilson.

Dixon Presbyterian

■ Family Night is the last Saturday of every month at 6 p.m. at Dixon School. The August meeting will be the annual barbecue at Gaston County Wildlife Club on Saturday, August 28.

■ The annual retreat to

Camp Grier is scheduled for August 10-12. All ages are invited. Make reservations with Nancy Hughes.

Bethlehem Baptist

■ The annual Homecoming celebration is scheduled for September 16.

Oak View Baptist

■ Homecoming is Sunday, August 12 at 11 a.m.

Pleasant Ridge

■ There will be a church-wide yard sale and breakfast Saturday, August 11 beginning at 6 a.m. The cost of breakfast is \$4. Proceeds will go to the 2002 Moscow mission trip. The church is located at 198 Pleasant Ridge Church Road, Shelby. Call 434-6431 for more information.

Central Methodist

■ The 17th annual spaghetti dinner will be held Friday, August 24 from 5-7 p.m. at the Kings Mountain High School cafeteria. Plates are \$5 for adults and \$3 for children 10 and under. For tickets or more information, call Larry Hamrick at 739-5405, Tim Miller at 739-5202, or the church office at 739-2471. All funds raised will benefit mission projects, including providing Christmas presents for area needy children.

Christian Freedom

■ "The Hands of God" Bible study will be held Saturday, August 18 from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. The cost is \$10 and lunch is provided. For more information call Ashley Sullens at 734-0964 or the church office at 739-4152.

Several other Bible studies will be held during the month of September. Orientation and registration dates will be on Sundays, August 19 and 26, at 3:30 p.m. at the church fellowship building. For more information, call the church at 739-4152 or Ashley Sullens at 734-0964.

The church is located at 246 Range Road, Kings Mountain.

Battleground Church

■ Battleground Church of God, 1506 Shelby Road, Kings Mountain, will hold revival August 22-25 at 7 p.m. Evangelist is Bart Stone. For more information call the church at 739-3773.

KM House of Prayer

■ Kings Mountain House of Prayer will hold a two-day revival August 11 at 6 p.m. and August 12 at 10 a.m. Speakers will be Bishop Joel Thomas of Word of Life World Outreach Ministries, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and Prophet Anthony Hudgins of Soaring Eagles Ministries. For more information call Bishop Brady Jackson at 739-

2895 or 974-4324.

Rainbow Life in Jesus

■ Rainbow Life in Jesus Ministry will hold a yard sale Saturday at 7 a.m. at 309 West Gold Street, Kings Mountain. For more information call 734-1498.

Gospel sings

■ The Songsters Quartet, Heart 2 Heart Trio, and The Praise Masters will be in concert Saturday, August 11 at 7 p.m. at Sandy Plains Baptist Church Family Life Center, 4816 Union Road, Gastonia.

In addition, there will be a poor man's supper at 5 p.m.

There will be freewill donations accepted at each event. Proceeds will go to the new Life Pregnancy Services and "Sunshine House, a Christian, non-profit ministry providing services for Gaston, Lincoln, Cleveland, and upper York counties.

For more information call 854-8877 or 736-9699.

■ Pure at Heart will be in concert Sunday at 2 p.m. at Full Gospel Church, 621 Fourth Street, Gaffney SC. For more information call 704-480-8115.

■ The Gospel Enforcers will be in concert Sunday at 10:30 a.m. at Morganton Church of God, 181 North in Morganton (one mile north of K-Mart). For more information call 828-437-4563.

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