



*A FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY STORY*  
*OF*  
*THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH*  
*OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD*



*The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd  
Hayesville, North Carolina*

## **Credits**

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<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Chapter 1- Early Clay County Episcopal History (1901-07)	5
Chapter 2- Beginnings of Good Shepherd	7
Chapter 3- Stepping Forth (1958-59)	19
Chapter 4- Our First Church (1959-1967)	23
Chapter 5- Growing (1967-1975)	31
Chapter 6- Relocating at Last (1976-1986)	39
Chapter 7- No Longer Yoked with Messiah (1986-1995)	53
Chapter 8- More Recent Years (1995-2005)	69
Epilogue	85
Appendix	87



## Chapter 1 - Early Clay County Episcopal History (1901-1907)

The history of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd is your story as well as mine. It is the story of God's people, created by Him to live according to His will and purpose. It is the memory and story of times and events we share, that made us the family that we are. In a larger sense our history is the narrative of our part in the Body of Christ, the ongoing story of the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the people of this parish and in the worship community they created, nourished and love. So the history of the Church of the Good Shepherd is like a singular piece of woven cloth. The lives and worship of the people in the church move within the warp of time gradually to shape a pattern. The weaving has always had meaning and direction, if a few imperfections here and there. From the start, though, our church has had a unique character and beauty of its own. The special role of Good Shepherd shines forth in the recollections of many people and the times and events that shaped us during the fifty years that we have been a church in the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina

The western mountains of North Carolina were sparsely settled in the first half of the twentieth century. The mountains then were even more beautiful than they are today. Unspoiled by clear-cutting and developments and industry, settlements were scattered, clustered along streams and rivers. Mountains and the border of Georgia uniquely isolated Clay County. Few roads were paved. Many homes lacked electricity and only a rare family or store had a telephone. Houses were built close to sources of fresh water and transportation, clustered together into small communities. There were strong loyalties within families, communities, towns and counties. Local folk tended to be wary of folks "not from here". There also tended to be significant differences between country life and town life. Churches drew people together in all places. Most churches had a conservative theology and social outlook. The Methodist Church split during the Civil War when mountain people were divided in their allegiance to the Union. Northern and Southern Methodist Churches still disagreed on political loyalties and other issues well into the twentieth century. The Baptist faith was strong, robust and sometimes contentious.

In many communities small groups split off to establish new churches when members disagreed strongly. Tent revivals were common especially in the summer. At funerals, passionate preaching warned of the dangers of damnation and the fires of hell. Transportation was scarce and, in the country, people walked many miles to gatherings, church, school, work and special events.

Patterns of evangelism in the Episcopal Church were different from those in other, more congregational, Protestant denominations. Although there were early attempts to establish Episcopal worship in Clay County the initiative did not last long. The first Episcopal Church service held in Clay County by an ordained minister was in May 1902. The Reverend John Archibald Deal, the first Episcopal missionary in the mountains, preached on the steps of the Clay County Courthouse, assisted by the Reverend M.G. Ledford. Earlier, in 1901, a lay reader, William Hunnicutt of Nantahala, held a service in the Irena Post Office section of Tusquittee. Under the direction of the Reverend Mr. Deal a chapel was erected in 1903 on land given by George Mosteller. It was called All Saints' Church. Apparently it was not used after 1907, but that same year, under the direction of Malcolm S. Taylor, who was later ordained an Episcopal minister, a lot in Hayesville was purchased with the intent of building a school. Perhaps because Episcopal liturgy and services did not fit with mountain customs in the years before World War I, we did not succeed in establishing churches and schools in this part of western North Carolina at that time.

The families connected with All Saints were: W. A. Hunnicutt, George W. Mosteller, Norman A. Mosteller, A.N. McClure, Arthur Mosteller, Morgan Stillwell, Joseph Hoffman, L. B. Mosteller, Jacob Tipton, James Perry, and Mrs. Fannie Cowart. (The History of Clay County by Guy S. Padgett, 1976)

## Chapter 2 – Beginnings of Good Shepherd (1951-58)

World War II brought many changes to life in this country and especially to the mountains. In Clay County and north Georgia the newly created Tennessee Valley Authority built dams, flooded farms, altered lives, provided new jobs and transformed farming. People sought work away from the mountains, fought overseas in the war, and left to live in cities elsewhere. Along with the exodus there was also an influx of newcomers. The seeds of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Clay County were sown then when four people with ties in these mountains met their partners in various parts of the country during these years.

By 1951 all four couples were living in Clay County. In each couple one person was a lifelong Episcopalian and the other had strong ties to the mountains of western North Carolina. Each married pair at that time was attending a church in its own community. However, occasionally they went for special Episcopal services to the Church of the Messiah in Murphy. Although at first they did not know each other, they all had a common yearning for an Episcopal Church and a loyalty to Clay County.

Monroe and I, Ellie Wilson, were one of these couples whose lives were clearly linked to the start of Good Shepherd. I offer this collection of memories in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of our church.

Soon after Monroe and I moved to Brasstown in 1945, I met Dr. Bryan Whitfield, a doctor in Murphy. He and his wife, Annette, were staunch Episcopalians from Alabama. They were very active and influential in the Church of the Messiah, the beautiful church on Murphy's main street across from the Cherokee County Courthouse. Messiah has a long history in the southwestern corner of the mountains, but it lacked a full time minister during the war years. It also received little attention from the Diocese during that time. Black Mountain was a long distance away fifty years ago. It was a five-hour drive on winding mountain roads through several small towns from Bishop Henry's home and the diocesan offices.

Our friend, Dr. Whitfield, urged me to attend services at Messiah in December 1950, when Bishop M. George Henry was to make a long-delayed visitation. Just a few months earlier Dr. Whitfield had guided me through the premature death of our first-born son. His deep

compassion and trust in God's will impressed me. So Dr. Whitfield's invitation beckoned me back to the Episcopal Church. Monroe and I went together to the service that evening despite the fact that we were a bit intimidated by the stylish town folks.

We found it quite a contrast to our previous church experiences since our marriage. While we lived at the Folk School we attended Little Brasstown Baptist Church, but after we bought our dairy farm in Clay County in 1949 we went to Hickory Stand Methodist Church just up Green Cove Road from our place as often as farm chores would allow. The service at Messiah was Monroe's introduction to church liturgy, and he liked it.

Monroe grew up in rural north Georgia. There he and his family regularly attended the Methodist Church in Hemp. His father was the Superintendent of Sunday School and their family of twelve filled several pews. Monroe felt the need for a church in which he could be involved now that he was married and living in Brasstown.

I was a lifelong Episcopalian who was going through a period of critical appraisal of the Church's approach to social justice over the centuries. Although I deeply loved Episcopal services, hymns and prayers, when I came to Brasstown I preferred the informality and sense of belonging offered by country churches.

After we went to the one service at Messiah we continued to go to Sunday school at Hickory Stand Methodist Church. At small Methodist churches in the country a circuit minister led church services and preached a sermon once a month. On other Sundays we just had Sunday school. There was a wonderful Methodist Women's Group that was educational and socially satisfying. Bible School for the children was good. However, I did feel the need for more spiritual growth for us all, and, for myself, inspiration from a preacher like Bishop Henry.

Ladies from Messiah visited me in Brasstown. They encouraged me to join activities there, but I was reluctant and busy with country life. Early in 1951, soon after the service at Messiah, Bishop Henry sent a young priest, the Reverend Rhett Winters, to be Vicar-in-Charge at Messiah. He had recently graduated from the Seminary at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. He and his wife moved into the small rectory in Murphy and were expecting a baby. He was filled with evangelical zeal and enthusiasm for the work of his first parish. He began organizing the church records and recognized the

names and addresses of the four couples from Clay County who came to Messiah sporadically but were not members of the church. They were Rufus and Dorothy Vick, Ruth and Quentin Moore, Eva and Jim Ledford, and Eleanor and Monroe Wilson. As soon as his time permitted, Mr. Winters visited each couple at home, spent some time getting acquainted and suggested that we start a monthly study group and get to know each other. This was the nucleus of what became the Church of the Good Shepherd in Hayesville.

First Mr. Winters went to see Rufus Vick at his office just off the Square in Hayesville. In 1942 “Vick” had become the Farm Agent for Clay County. He graduated with a degree in agriculture from North Carolina State College in Raleigh. He was part of a special team sponsored by the Tennessee Valley Authority to teach soil conservation and new farming techniques in Clay County. This was done because of the changes that came with the building of dams and flooding of farmlands. The team’s commission was to “improve the quality of country life”. His associate was Velma Beam Moore, the Home Demonstration Agent, who frequently visited us in Brasstown after we bought our farm. Because of his work “Vick” knew almost everyone in Clay County where farming was still the chief source of income. He had recently come by to look at our dairy herd. After touring the farm when he came to the house he shared his pride and joy in having recently married Dot, a beautiful young music teacher from Franklin. Vick and Dot were attending the First Methodist Church in Hayesville, but Vick missed the Episcopal Church services that were part of his Eastern Carolina heritage in Roanoke Rapids, near the Virginia border.

Next Reverend Winters visited the new home of Quentin and Ruth Moore in west Hayesville. Quentin was a third or fourth generation native of Clay County, having been raised on Tusquittee. His father was a State Senator and Quentin graduated from Western Carolina State Teachers College in Cullowhee. Joining the U.S. Air Force in 1941, he received his bombardier wings in 1942. Then Quentin was stationed in Hastings, Nebraska, before going overseas to fly in “Group 8” in the “Battle for Britain”.

In Hastings he met Ruth Eldredge who was a volunteer at the USO and entertained troops while they waited at the Air Force Base for deployment. Ruth graduated from the University of Nebraska and had recently returned home. She and Quentin were married in Hastings before he left for England.

They came to Clay County after the war. Quentin became postmaster and knew everyone in Hayesville as well as coming to know everyone who moved in after the war. The Moores were able to give Mr. Winters a good sense of what life was like in Hayesville and Clay County. Although they were attending the First Methodist Church, they were very much interested in an Episcopal Church. Ruth was a cradle Episcopalian who had been active in the Pro-Cathedral in Hastings. Her father was on the vestry there, taught Sunday school, sang in the choir, and saw to it that Ruth had excellent musical training.

On his third visit to Clay County Mr. Winters managed to find Eva and Jim Ledford who lived way out the old graveled Tusquittee Road. He also met their children, five year old Becky and three year old Tommy. Reverend Winters immediately felt at home, fascinated by the playfulness of the children and the warm welcome of the parents who both entertained him and kept an eye on their country store.

Becky Van Gorder told me that her Dad, James Clyde Ledford, grew up in Andrews, North Carolina. At the start of our involvement in World War II he volunteered for the U.S. Air Force. While waiting to be called into service he traveled widely as a distributor for a meat company based in Andrews. In Charleston, West Virginia, a fellow Mason introduced him to his niece, Eva Laverne Wakeman. Eva became his bride.

Eva, a cradle Episcopalian, had moved with her parents from Ohio to Charleston where she was a teller in a large bank. She and Jim were married June 1, 1943. Nine days later Jim was shipped out to England where he served in the Air Force for four years. At the end of the war he returned to West Virginia where their two children, Becky and Tommy, were born. Later, after Jim's parents had moved from Andrews to Clay County, Jim and Eva returned to the mountains and opened a small general store near Moss Memorial Baptist Church on Tusquittee Road. Jim and Eva gave Mr. Winters a hearty welcome and a wonderful sense of the ways of rural life in the mountains. They also pointed out that they were a long way from Murphy and needed an Episcopal Church right here in Clay County.

Finally Mr. Winters came to Brasstown to find the fourth Episcopalian couple living in Clay County. He stopped at the Post Office on Settawig Road to ask directions to the Wilson Farm.

Talking to Mrs. Iowa Green, the postmistress, he asked, “Do you know where Eleanor Wilson lives?”

Mrs. Green replied, “Well, right up yonder,” waving her arm toward our house up on the hill.

“Is she an Episcopalian?” the minister asked.

“Yes, I guess she’s one of those,” came her crisp reply.

Mr. Winters was both surprised and amused at that answer. Ever after I became “one of those” in his story of the search for Episcopalians in Clay County.

He came right on up to the house that day and spent some time with us. I was delighted that the minister from Messiah visited, glad he searched us out. Our conversation was quite different from that of the last time a preacher came to call. One afternoon unexpectedly a minister from a church I did not know visited me at home. We talked a long time and then he asked me to kneel and pray with him on the bare floor in front of the fireplace. He prayed at length extemporaneously in a manner new to me. His prayer focused on how difficult it was for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. It left me quite uncomfortable and speechless although I was familiar with the Biblical passage. Did he think we were wealthy? We were barely scraping by on the income from the milking of a few cows and struggled to make payments on our farm. We had been dairy farming for three years.

Monroe and I met at the Folk School in 1941. He grew up in Hemp, a rural community in northwest Georgia. After finishing high school at age 16, he came to the Folk School in 1937 to further his education and stayed on to work there. I came to the Folk School right after graduating from college. My staff position was the management of craft sales. The school provided a market for wood-carvings and hand-woven, vegetable dyed woolen table runners and capes. Sales raised income for the support of the school. One of the purposes of the school was to demonstrate to the craftsmen in the community that they also could make money from the sale of handicrafts.

After a year in Brasstown, I returned home to teach in New York while Monroe enlisted in the Navy to spend two and a half years on a light cruiser in the Pacific theater of operations during World War II. We were married after the war on October 18, 1945 at my childhood

home on Long Island. Then we returned to the Folk School in 1946 and spent three years there until we bought our small subsistence dairy farm in Brasstown in 1949.

Rhett Winters understood that these four couples wanted to know more about the Episcopal Church. He suggested that we could start a study group in Clay County. Monroe and I joined the group with the other three couples and were invited to our first “get acquainted meeting” at the Vicks’ home in Hayesville.

On that evening in July 1952 we found our way to their small house in west Hayesville for our first meeting. Vick was a stocky, balding man in his early thirties, an extrovert who greeted us all pleasantly with a grin on his face and a cigar in his hand. His wife, Dot, was pretty, thin, and graciously welcoming. Eva and Jim Ledford were also there. Eva was tall with dark hair and a genial, friendly manner. Her husband, Jim, was quiet until someone started telling stories and then he could match the best of them. Ruth and Quentin Moore were somewhat quiet and reserved at first. They soon warmed up and Quentin’s deep belly laugh punctuated the jokes the men told together as the women served refreshments. Rhett Winters, usually serious, relaxed in this informal family atmosphere and became one of the group.

The evening was the first of many happy meetings together. We had so much in common. We were all starting our married lives in communities that were relatively new to us. That evening we agreed to order a volume in the Church’s Teaching Series, published by Seabury Press. We decided to meet monthly with each couple taking a turn as host.

The Ledfords invited us for the second study and discussion. They had a country store on property belonging to Jim’s family and lived in an apartment in the back of it. One evening late in August, Monroe and I set out in our red GMC pickup truck to find them up “on Tusquittee”. The road was narrow, unpaved, somewhat graveled and sparsely settled. Few houses had electricity and there were no telephone lines as far as we could see. It was dusky dark as we wound around curves, examining each place by the side of the road for something resembling a store. When we reached the place where the road curved back along the other side of the creek Monroe stopped the truck. We looked at each other and burst into laughter.

“Do you think we’ll ever find them?” we asked.

“There’s absolutely nobody to ask.”

“I don’t see a light anywhere.”

“Everyone must have gone to bed.”

Monroe started the truck again and headed back the way we had just come. We slowly retraced the road. Sure enough, there it was, perfectly visible on the backtrack, only hidden by a curve in the road and a clump of trees that had blocked the sight of the store as we drove up the road, but were not in the way now. The Moores and the Vicks and our preacher were there already. The Ledfords welcomed us with genuine hospitality, just like in the Bible. The informal gathering at the store set us all at ease. Becky and Tommy told jokes and made us all laugh and gave us hope for the future, before going cheerfully off to bed when we started our study. We all felt even more certain that we wanted to continue with this group.

Since Ruth and Quentin Moore lived in west Hayesville we met there most often as time went on because they had the largest living room and were centrally located. However, in turn, everyone came to Brasstown and crowded around our fireplace, several sitting cross-legged on the floor. Our Vicar was a good teacher. The Seabury teaching series was an excellent springboard for discussions. We were learning about the history of the Episcopal Church. More importantly, Rhett Winters encouraged us to be involved in learning, to really get acquainted with him, to enjoy fellowship together and to ask questions. I had many heated discussions with Rhett Winters about doctrine and how to understand the Bible. His openness to my questions and doubts set the stage for honest examination of feelings and opinions for me and for the group. He assured us that God accepts each of us “faults and all”. We were often entertained as the children ran through the house playing “Cowboys and Indians” while we tried to concentrate on the history of the Episcopal Church. These meetings were the birth of our church family’s social life and adult education.

We had so much fun together that we branched out from monthly study meetings to outings and potlucks. There were picnics up on “Tuni Gap” at the Bob Allison Campground and on Chatuge Lake, in Hiawassee, at picnic tables by the side of the road.

Two other couples joined our group for a while. James and Kathleen Blankenship were dairy farming in Hayesville. They met and married in England where Kathleen had been a member of the Church

of England. They had several young children and often joined us for picnics. Later when we began meeting in the Masonic Building in Hayesville they came to church for services and potlucks. Richard Anderson met his wife, Faith, in Australia. They and their two small children lived in the Sweetwater community and Monroe and I saw them often because they also were farming. Like Kathleen, Faith missed her Anglican Church and they were interested in beginning an Episcopal Church in Clay County. However, before becoming part of our church family they moved to South Carolina to find work. We kept in touch and they joined an Episcopal Church there. Later Faith asked me to be a long distance godmother to their youngest daughter and we saw them when they came back to visit.

We all were beginning our families then as well. Danny Wilson was born in 1951. Alan Moore was born in December 1952. Mark Vick was born in January 1954. The church family became livelier. We began having Evening Prayer Services at three every Sunday afternoon either at the Moores' or the Vicks' in Hayesville, because it was the mid-point for us all. Bishop Henry visited on October 3, 1954 and confirmed Quentin Moore at his home. Often after the afternoon Evening Prayer service adults would have coffee and visit while the children of assorted ages went outside to play tag, hide and seek, touch football or catch, whatever game might include the all the young ones with Becky and Tommy sometimes acting as coach and referee.

Becky Van Gorder now adds her "Early Memories of Good Shepherd".

"I remember being at Sunday afternoon three o'clock cottage meetings at the homes of Ruth and Quentin Moore, Dot and Rufus Vick and Ellie and Monroe Wilson. The Reverend Morgan who drove the "old" road from Cartoogejay sometimes conducted services. It was a precious, genteel introduction to the essence of our Episcopal Church for a very impressionable youth. This man, so gentle and kind, so reverent, led and guided our gracious, persevering Christian adults and us, pretty rowdy youngsters. I recall only kind, perhaps suggesting, mentoring from the adults of Good Shepherd when our youthful exploring might have called for more direct action. The four founding couples always displayed generous patience and impeccable morality in all our gatherings. Even though they were our mentors I always remember being treated as one of them, never as a diminutive human.

I grew up at Good Shepherd feeling like an equal member of the congregation. Small is strengthening.”

When Mr. Winters moved to another parish in 1954, Rufus Vick and Quentin Moore led the afternoon Evening Prayer services for several months. The Reverend Rufus Morgan came over from Franklin once a month to celebrate Communion. We saved the money we had been contributing toward a priest's salary and looked forward to having another vicar. In the middle of 1955 Bishop Henry sent the Reverend William Russell to be priest-in-charge at the Church of the Messiah and to provide services to our group in Hayesville.

The Reverend William Russell and his wife, “Fiddle”, had a growing family of very young children. They settled in the rectory in Murphy, but joined us often for picnics and potlucks. Bill Russell organized us into a mission congregation at a meeting on September 9, 1955 soon after he arrived. At that time any congregation in the Diocese that was not self-supporting was a mission church so both Messiah and Good Shepherd were missions. Each congregation had its own vestry and budget. Quentin Moore was our senior warden. Rufus Vick was our treasurer, James Ledford, junior warden and I, Eleanor Wilson, was clerk. I remember when we later met with a representative from the diocese and the vestry of Messiah at the Hotel Regal on the Square in Murphy. We discussed the relationship between the two parishes and decided that our church would be known as the Church of the Good Shepherd. Incidentally I remember that the hotel chairs that we sat on would become part of Good Shepherd seating when the Regal Hotel closed in the early eighties.

On a beautiful summer afternoon later in September I was sitting on the wall in back of our house in Brasstown watching the children at play in the yard and sandbox when Bill Russell drove up. He had papers in his hand.

“I need your signature on these papers,” he said, without much more than a friendly greeting. “We need to be recognized by the Diocese as a Mission Congregation.”

Cautiously I explored my responsibilities as clerk in such a role. Monroe and I were skimping along with income from only a few cows as we paid for the farm year by year. Farm families then were raising veal or beef calves for market in order to contribute to the church budget. Bill assured me that there would be no additional financial

responsibilities for any individual family. Joyfully, I signed the papers, delighted at our new status. We received recognition by the Diocese as a Mission later in September 1955.

The Russells were a faith-filled family. Despite our informal facilities Bill brought ceremony and liturgy to our congregation. He shaped our church family into a community of faith with a real sense of holiness. We felt the presence of God amidst our makeshift surroundings. Our tiny daughter, Anne, was baptized in July 1956. That warm Sunday afternoon we gathered in the small apartment the Vicks had recently rented in the back of an office building on the square in Hayesville. For the first time that day the Roberts family joined us; they had moved from Sylva in March. Bud and Frances Roberts had four children: Phyllis, Patty, and the newborn twins, Pam and Bill. Each of the babies was cradled in the lap of an older sister as the family filled a comfortable sofa. They almost doubled the size of our congregation and the rest of us perched on chairs and stools around the room. The children were all delighted to be present at a baptism. Mr. Russell asked Dot Vick for a Pyrex bowl from her kitchen, filled it with water and blessed it. With nothing more elaborate, we had an impromptu font. The liturgy was as beautiful as that of any elegant baptism.

We soon outgrew our various living rooms for services on Sunday. We moved into the Agricultural Assembly Hall on the ground floor of the Masonic Building in Hayesville. There we still had afternoon services and monthly potluck suppers. That is when Kathleen Blankenship was confirmed, her children baptized, and the James Blankenship family joined us regularly for church services. We often picked up the whole family in the back of our red truck on the way to services, picnics and potlucks. Now they were really part of our congregation. We had Sunday school, Christmas parties and showers as babies kept on arriving.

In 1955 after an encouraging visit from Mrs. Kate Mease of St. Andrews Church in Canton, we organized a chapter of the Episcopal Church Women. Eva Ledford was elected president. We met in each other's homes, usually in the evening. Monthly dues were twenty-five cents. We undertook a number of service projects with assistance and advice from Mrs. Mease, president of the Diocesan ECW. Becky Van Gorder remembers watching her mother and other women crochet bandages for leper colonies in Haiti. We also held vestry

meetings in whatever home was convenient, enjoying discussion and fellowship late into the night.

During Advent 1956, Mr. Russell was called to the church in Marion, North Carolina. With no minister for Messiah or for the group in Hayesville Mr. Russell drove back from Marion for the Christmas Eve Service. The Good Shepherd congregation drove to Murphy to join Messiah for that beautiful midnight service. For six months again we had lay-led services.

In 1957 the Reverend Alex Hanson filled the vacancy as Priest-in-Charge at Messiah and Good Shepherd. Almost immediately Mr. Hanson changed the hour of service in Hayesville from three in the afternoon to nine in the morning and we began to have Morning Prayer instead of Evening Prayer. Monroe and I had continued our practice of attending the Methodist Church and Sunday School at Hickory Stand up the road from our farm in Brasstown, going then to Episcopal Services in Hayesville after the children's afternoon naps. The change in time meant we had to make a choice. Monroe decided to be confirmed in the Episcopal Church and we only went to Hickory Stand for special occasions and the children's Vacation Bible School.

We had to get up early to take care of farm chores and get three children ready for church in Hayesville by nine. From Brasstown we could choose Old Highway 64 through Warne or a gravel road that wound up Settawig, through Sweetwater and Qualla into Hayesville. Five of us in the cab of our aging red pickup truck had a cozy trip. Others in a congregation that now included fourteen small children had some hurdles as well. However, it was unusual for anyone to be absent except for illness. We held Sunday school classes in different corners of the large Agricultural Assembly Room after church was over and the "preacher" rushed off to make the eleven o'clock service in Murphy.

The fifties brought us together. We grew from a determined octet meeting in different homes, to a group of six families meeting in rented space. Successively we enjoyed four different priests, visitations from Bishop Henry and recognition by the Diocese. There was an organized Sunday school, ECW, and vestry. The Lord was definitely at work and we were listening; ready to grow more with His help.



**Early Church Members (1953)**

Front Left to Right: Eva Ledford, Tommy Ledford, Becky Ledford, Mark Vick, Dot Vick, Mrs. Winters and children.

Back Left to Right: Ruth Moore, Alan Moore, Ellie Wilson, Daniel Wilson, Rufus Vick, the Rev. Rhett Winters, Monroe Wilson, Jim Ledford. Photo by Quentin Moore.

### Chapter 3 - Stepping Forth (1958-59)

In 1958-59 the Church of the Good Shepherd, already a vibrant worshipping community built its first home. As we outgrew the Masonic Building in 1958 the entire congregation began planning to build a church. Acquiring property and constructing a building were big steps forward. We knew that there had been some Episcopalian beginnings in Clay County early in the century but we were unable to verify a land purchase or locate any record of it in the diocesan office at Black Mountain. The Diocese of Western North Carolina had never moved on starting a church in our area. With approval of the proper committees and the bishop, Rufus Vick located three tenths of an acre on what is now Myers Chapel Road West. It was within town limits and would soon have city water and sewage. Although not immediately visible from the town center or the highway, it was easily accessible. The name "Good Shepherd" was appropriate for we were located on a corner of farmland. Even with a tight budget we were able to purchase the land and plan a building.

We were filled with hope, expectations, dreams and enthusiasm, but the Holy Spirit kept us realistic also. First we would build a parish hall we could use temporarily as a church. Then we would expand the structure, as we were able to purchase the adjoining land. We could use the extra funds accumulated in the periods we were without a priest or minister. We had a building fund drive, borrowed \$2000 from the Diocese and received a grant of \$2000. Our contractor, Gwen Cornwell, built us a concrete block building of 960 square feet. It had one large room, a small kitchen with a serving counter, a unisex lavatory, a small meeting and vesting room. In our optimism we planned that the window at the end of the short hallway between the rooms would eventually become a door leading to the sanctuary.

During the winter of nineteen fifty-nine, as building was progressing, we made arrangements for furnishings and equipment. Believing that each church in the community is a gift of God we invited help from other churches and individuals in the community and in the Diocese. We wrote letters and articles for the local newspaper publicizing our hopes and dreams. It was nervy and presumptuous, but generous contributions poured in.

The Church of the Messiah with which we continued to have a

yoked ministry gave us our first altar service book. As we separated from the Murphy connection a bit we maintained a warm friendship. From the Church of Saint Barnabas, we received ten wormy chestnut pews. Saint Barnabas was a black Episcopal Church on Highway 64 as it approached the downtown area of Murphy. They had received these pews from a church in the Balsam area near the Blue Ridge Parkway. That church had been closed for a number of years. The Saint Barnabas congregation kept the pews in storage in hopes of enlarging their church in the future. The Diocese planned to integrate the two Murphy churches. St. Barnabas' building and land were located in the area that would become the intersection point for Highways 64 and 23 and would be purchased by the State Highway Department. The congregation of Saint Barnabas became members of Messiah.

From Andrews came a wealth of gifts. The Episcopal congregation of the Chapel of the Holy Comforter, which met on the lower floor of the town library, was closing, at least temporarily. The group there had dwindled to two remaining couples who decided to drive to Murphy and join the congregation of the Messiah. As a loan on June 30, 1959, the Andrews group gave Good Shepherd their organ and a tall narrow marble column with a hollowed cup-like space in the top for our font. They also gave kneeling benches, cushions, their hymnals, and prayer books. For the altar guild they donated a beautiful hand-crafted maple linen chest and some altar linens. In addition there were brass candlesticks and small vases, cruets, a maple hand-carved wafer box, and a candle-snuffer. They gave furnishings for the small room with two low tables and benches along with some bookshelves for the children's Sunday school. Last they donated the prayer desk. Many of these gifts are still ours and in constant use in our services.

Mrs. Hugh Mease at St. Andrews Church in Canton, North Carolina, became a good friend to the women at Good Shepherd when we formed our chapter of Episcopal Church Women. She saw to it that we received many beautiful furnishings from their congregation. One of their craftsmen made the black walnut wooden credence for our church. St. Andrews also gave us the antique railroad bell that hangs at the entrance of Good Shepherd and is rung before each service. Canton was home to a large Champion Paper manufacturing plant with many steam locomotives in the train yards, so this antique bell came from there. Canton folks also gave us a lectern, large Bible, kneeling pad, retable and a collection plate.

Another gift from the Canton church was an altar. It was made of walnut and they had replaced it with a larger one. The smaller one we received was in disrepair; but Monroe Wilson repaired and refinished it completely. Then he fitted it with a new top of native marble from the quarry in Marble. Over a period of time Monroe also made the cherry wood altar cross, three-cup candlesticks for the Morning Prayer services and tall wooden candleholders for Communion services. He made shelves for the flowers on each side of the altar, a valance under which we hung a white brocade dossal behind the altar, the altar rail, and two wooden collection plates.

Other churches in the Diocese were generous also and gave:

Grace Church, Morganton, NC, -- a cash donation

St. Mary's, Blowing Rock, -- a chalice and paten

St. Stephens, Morganton, -- a white dossal

St. Marks, Roxbury, Connecticut, -- altar linens

Mrs. Hayes, a friend from Florida, -- the hymnal board

A Church of England friend, -- an altar cloth

The Women's Auxiliary of the Diocese, -- the All Saints Day Offering for 1956.

These gifts and others from friends and neighbors blessed us and continue to remind us that we are all one in Christ. We carefully recorded all the gifts in a scrapbook and began a collection of snapshots and newspaper clippings relating to church activities.

As we prepared to furnish the main room we thought we had only enough space for five of the ten pews. They were old and rough but well made and sturdy. We sanded and smoothed them and painted each a rich chocolate brown. Then we placed them in rows down the center of the large room with an aisle on each side. We arranged folding chairs at the back of the church and were ready to begin services at Good Shepherd.



**Consecration of the Church of the Good Shepherd**

**June 21, 1959**

The Rev. Alan Hanson, Bishop George Henry, Daniel Wilson,  
Mark Vick, Alan, Moore, Ruth Moore, Anne Wilson, Dot Vick,  
Marie Vick, Jim Ledford, Ellie Wilson, John Wilson, Frances Roberts,  
and Mrs. Eldredge

## Chapter 4 – Our First Church (1959-67)

We dedicated our new church home on Myers Chapel Road to the Glory of God on June 21, 1959. The Right Reverend M. George Henry, Bishop of Western North Carolina, attended and consecrated the altar. Present also were the Reverend William Russell who had organized us as a parish and the Reverend Alex Hanson who currently served our congregation. The Reverend Rufus Morgan who had supplied communion services for us often in our early years had come from Franklin for the occasion. The entire congregation of Good Shepherd, as well as friends and out of town guests came to the service. The little sanctuary was filled to capacity. After the service we placed a folding screen in front of the altar and converted the space into a parish hall, ready for a bountiful supper to celebrate the occasion. In the twenty-two years we used this building as our church we did this often. The space served double duty for worship and fellowship.

We were thankful to have our own church home. It was simple, unfinished and bare, but it was ours. We wrote friends and newspaper articles and announced the big event. We also sent thank you letters to churches and individuals that had given gifts, and invited everyone to come and see the place in person.

In the autumn of our first year in the church we sold fruit cakes to raise money for equipment for the kitchen and supplies for the Altar Guild. The men formed a Men's Association whose goal was to plant trees and shrubbery, work in the yard and complete the building. Rufus Vick set a row of white pines as a windbreak behind the church.

It was very cold that fall. We invested in two square electric space heaters, but there was no insulation on the concrete block walls and it was drafty. Our first church baptism took place in October. Florence Wilson was bundled as warmly as a "bug in a rug" but she was blue with cold, and we all shivered. Our senior member of the congregation, Viola Myer, had recently retired from New Jersey. She became our fairy godmother by donating a brick flue and an oil heater for one side of the room. Still the cold permeated the unfinished concrete block walls.

Tommy Ledford became our first "Altar Boy", and a few years later he was our first confirmand in the new church building. Almost immediately we recommenced Sunday school following the nine fifteen morning church service. The younger children had their class in the all-purpose meeting room, now fitted with the low tables

and benches donated by the Andrews congregation. We contrived a “Bible Story TV set” made from a cardboard box with a large square window cut in the front. The children drew crayon pictures on a roll of white shelf paper fastened to thick dowel rods. In turn each child had a chance to twist the rods, move the pictures and tell the story as the rest of the group watched.

Adults who were not teaching, doing altar guild duty or presiding over coffee hour sat on the back pews and discussed the lessons of the day or the preacher’s message.

Becky Van Gorder remembers her class: “A favorite memory of mine is our Sunday school classes taught by Rufus Vick in his white Plymouth sedan out in our gravel parking lot. He, at the driver’s seat, would teach, question and advise us about the lesson as we sat, packed into the back seat. He constantly edified God’s Word. We loved him and our lessons as we learned about the Bible and the Episcopal Church.”

In later year’s Becky’s mother, Eva took responsibility for the older children. I remember her leaning over the back of the front seat to teach the group in back. Becky also recalls that “we youngsters at Good Shepherd were invited to Messiah for a week of church school each summer. What a time of learning about our church, the Bible, making crafts, singing, playing games, creating new Episcopalian friendships in another town. We were strengthened to know that we in Hayesville had company, nice company. No longer did we feel alone in the land of the Baptists.”

In the fall of 1960 the women of the church held the first annual church bazaar. During the winter and spring some made aprons with colorful cross-stitched borders and pockets. Others made potholders or knit scarves and mittens. Many made Christmas ornaments for sale. As the time for the bazaar neared we baked pies, cookies, muffins, bread and cakes. After the pews were pushed against the walls we placed a round tea table in the front corner. Set with someone’s best gold threaded cloth, fine china and silver tea service, a small plate invited “freewill offerings”. An arrangement of bittersweet and marigolds in a bronze colored pottery bowl was the centerpiece. Ruth Moore presided over the teapot as friends and neighbors were invited to help themselves to the “goodies”. We were anxious for everyone to see the church and to become acquainted with Episcopalianians.

ECW meetings continued usually n the evenings at each home.

Again Becky recalls, “I loved being accepted at our ECW meetings in my teens. Each member rotated a turn in hosting everyone at their home, treating after business was completed with an awesome dessert served on their best china with linen napkins and fine flatware. “Business” always seemed to be conducted with conviviality and laughter, focused on service to the outreach missions of Good Shepherd. It was an honor to be accepted by these ladies and I will always treasure their kindness.”

During the nineteen sixties the congregation grew. Everyone shared in the mission and the work of the church. Each family took responsibility for the care of the building one-month at a time, cleaning all the rooms, the yard and parking lot, doing altar guild work, preparing coffee hour and Sunday School lessons. Often all members of each family participated. With appreciation, Becky Van Gorder remembers that adults treated the “children” of those times with respect when they straightened the prayer books and hymnals after a service, dusted the pews on Saturday mornings, and dried the dishes after a potluck.

Becky writes: “Church potluck suppers were wonderful gatherings with all the ladies’ very best home-cooked dishes and festive fellowship for one and all. As in all other events, I always felt heartily accepted by all our blessed Good Shepherd adults at each of these happy feasts of fellowship and fun. We enjoyed moving heavy pews, putting screens around our beloved altar and setting up serving tables and chairs to make our dinners possible. The reverse process was just as joyous after the dinner. Everyone lent a hand.”

We have continued monthly potlucks for many years, but we savor the memories of such specialties as Ruth Moore’s lemon meringue pie, Dot Vick’s chocolate brownies, Eva Ledford’s green bean casserole and Frances Robert’s potato salad. My contribution was baked beans and I usually took home an empty bowl.

We welcomed newcomers with open arms, rejoicing especially when Episcopalians like Florence Old offered to share in the work. Even if people did not choose to become Episcopalians they participated in church life.

Otto and Marguerite Woods who lived at the Folk School in Brasstown regularly came to church and to special events. They played the violin and recorder often in entertainment at suppers, and taught

several of the children to play recorders in concert with them. In September of 1962 they gave a colored slide presentation of their trip to South America with the Country-Dance Association from Berea, Kentucky.

One older couple, Mr. and Mrs. Gilstrom, Lutherans from Chicago, without a church in Clay County, attended services every Sunday and took part in all our activities. In the fall of 1959, Mrs. Gilstrom's inspiration for our first fund raising project was a door to door sale of fruitcakes.

Ruth Moore's parents, Floyd and Irma Eldredge from Hastings, Nebraska, visited and supported us regularly. I still remember Mr. Eldredge's beautiful tenor voice resounding with his beloved old hymns. At Christmas from Nebraska he sent tremendous Hershey chocolate bars, enough for each child in our congregation. A few years later when Mr. Eldredge retired from the insurance business in Hastings, he and Mrs. Eldredge moved to Hayesville. She became a stalwart member of the ECW and they both were enthusiastic participants in all our church activities.

A family who had moved to Hiawassee from Miami became members of the congregation. The father, Bill Welch, was the director of the High School band in Hiawassee. We were alerted to their presence when Bill had an accident and was hospitalized in Atlanta. His wife, Evelyn was a CPA who had stayed in Miami to finish her work through the tax year so with Dad incapacitated the boys were on their own. Needless to say someone from the church visited Bill in the hospital, assured the boys of our presence and stood by until the family was reunited. Evelyn became an active member of the ECW. The three boys, Martin, Jeff, and Pat all played musical instruments. They often furnished a concert program at a church supper, and Martin became a lay reader.

From the beginning we were blessed with musical talent. Ruth Moore and Frances Roberts were accomplished pianists. Dot Vick had a beautiful singing voice and played the piano. She had been a music teacher and usually chose the hymns and led the singing. Ruth and Frances each took a turn at the pump organ. It was activated with foot pedals that blew the air through the pipes. Playing it required physical activity in addition to musical talent. However, the tone was beautiful. We were joined sometime in the late sixties by

Alberta Denton and her daughter, Pamela. Alberta had a fine voice and was pleased to do solos or duets with Pam when they were called for.

In 1962 Mr. Hanson moved to Erwin, NC and in June the Reverend Mr. Hamilton Witter became the Vicar- in- Charge at Messiah and Good Shepherd. With a wife and small daughter, Diane, Mr. Witter filled the needs of both churches well, perhaps especially because he had recently transferred from the Methodist Church and half of our congregation came from Protestant backgrounds, from the “low church” branch of Episcopalians. The Witters’ second child, Clark, was born on New Year’s in 1963.

We were sorry that year to lose Frances Roberts as our organist. Along with Bud and their four Sunday School children they moved to Murphy and became part of our sister church, Messiah. It was a sizable loss but we kept fellowship with them all through the years.

In addition to our annual visitations from Bishop Henry we were blessed regularly with visits, often impromptu, from the Reverend Jim Perry, Jr., Bishop Henry’s assistant in the Diocesan Office in Black Mountain. Jim made frequent trips from Black Mountain to the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. He often detoured a bit out of his way to come through Hayesville. So we came to know and love him. I remember one sermon he preached about church attendance. He was emphasizing the way in which faithfulness becomes a habit. Once he was obliged to travel west on a business trip and was delayed in O’Hare Airport in Chicago on Sunday morning. With considered emotion Jim related his feeling of emptiness and sadness at being denied a church service that day. Many of us now share the same feelings when circumstances rule out church on Sunday.

In April 1963, Jim conducted a Preaching Mission at Good Shepherd. His messages on “Men of God’ were exciting. The church was packed and the kids all crushed into the front pew with the iron pipe railing in front of it. As preachers are wont to do, Rev. Jim asked a rhetorical question about whether or not we wanted evil in our lives. John Wilson, who was six, spoke up immediately with a loud “No, Sir!” The congregation that included guests and neighbors as well as the regulars had a good laugh for many a day about that. After the service we all gathered on the front steps of the church while Jim played the guitar and we sang hymns long into the night. Although preaching missions and revivals were not usually Episcopal customs, I think the

fact that Good Shepherd had this “revival” drew us closer to the mountain tradition of “tent revivals” and made us better understood in Clay County.

That was just one of many happy times. In the summers we took all the children in the church swimming “at the Point”, teaching independence and life-saving skills as well as trust in the protection of God. Learning to float in the lake was an exercise in faith. To trust that if we relax, the water will hold us up is a metaphor illustrating that if we put our trust in God “He will hold us up.” Some years we shared Vacation Bible School with the Methodist Church in Hayesville in order to have more children who could participate. Later for several years we went to Vacation Bible School and Youth Group with Messiah. Adults from both churches participated in the teaching as the children learned and played.

One year a Seminary Student, The Rev. Robert L. Haden, Jr. led the program at Messiah as part of his training. The children remembered with pleasure the excitement of having a young teacher from Charlotte who told funny stories and performed finger play tales for the young ones. Church School education was always a high priority. In 1964, Danny Wilson went to Jim Perry’s hiking camp at Sky Valley near Brevard. Dan was the first of a series of Good Shepherd children to go to church camps. A regular procession of children from Good Shepherd to Camp Henry in Black Mountain followed.

The next year, 1965, Jim Perry died suddenly of a heart attack. It was the third of the tragic losses we sustained during the early sixties. James Ledford, our faithful and devoted junior warden, died November 1, 1962. Rufus Vick died in June of 1964 after heart surgery in Atlanta. Vick was often our guiding senior warden and both he and Jim were founding fathers of the church. We felt these losses keenly, two of our original families were sorely bereft and the church family impoverished, spiritually as well as physically. After Jim Ledford’s death the family, Eva, Becky and Tommy moved from Tusquittee to Myers Chapel West to live next door to the Vicks. However two years later, after Rufus Vick died, Dot Vick, Mark and Marie moved to Franklin to be near her parents.

In the aftermath of these losses, in March 1966, Mr. Witter was called to another church and we were left for the rest of the year without a minister at either Messiah or Good Shepherd.

Quentin Moore, who at different times had been our senior warden, trusted treasurer and lay reader, reassured us with his customary dry humor that we would again save money without a “preacher”. Then he and Marty Welch who was a student at Young Harris College and also a licensed Episcopal lay reader, assumed responsibility for the weekly Morning Prayer Services.

Occasionally the Reverend Rufus Morgan came from Franklin for the once a month Holy Communion Services. Over the years that he came to fill in for us he gradually lost his eyesight until he was almost completely blind. However, he had a reliable driver and friend who accompanied him. Mr. Morgan knew the entire service from memory. It was an inspiration just to have him visit.

Rufus Morgan was a fabled “institution” in western North Carolina. His home was in the Cartoogejay section of Macon County. He was an accomplished hiker and mountain climber. The Morgan family was Episcopal pioneers in counties all across the mountains, including Cherokee County where they were among the first families at the Church of the Messiah in Murphy. In his younger days, the Reverend Rufus Morgan built a number of small churches with his own hands, the tiny church on the mountain in Cherokee and St. John’s Church in Cartoogejay as well as an outdoor chapel for hikers on the side of old Highway sixty-four on Chunky Gal Mountain.



**Sunday School Class – 1963**

Front Left to Right: John Wilson, Florence Wilson, Pam Roberts, Marie Vick, Anne Wilson, and Bill Roberts.

Back Left to Right: Becky Ledford, Daniel Wilson, Alan Moore, Tommy Ledford, Patty Roberts, Phyllis Roberts, and Mark Vick.



**Easter Altar – 1970**

## Chapter 5 - Growing (1967-75)

In January 1967, the Reverend Jack L. Watson, a native of Cedar Key, Florida, accepted Bishop Henry's call to be Priest-in-Charge of the Episcopal churches in Cherokee and Clay counties. We were overjoyed and excited to welcome Jack, a good-looking, unmarried priest. He had graduated from seminary at Sewanee, Tennessee, and had a few years of experience in his first "charge" at a small church in the panhandle of Florida.

One of the bishop's sermons in our early years exhorted us at Good Shepherd to be a lighthouse, shining forth into the community, not merely polishing our own light. He urged us to reach out to those who needed to be saved from the deep waters and rocky shores of life. We had learned to trust Bishop Henry to send the right person to us, and we were delighted to welcome Jack.

At Good Shepherd we experienced growth as our Vicar settled into the new rectory in Murphy and divided his time between the two churches. The Reverend Jack is a "fisher of men". He felt free to spend a good portion of his time cast his net for all whom needed God's Word. On his first Sunday at Good Shepherd his innate respect for each individual was demonstrated as he knelt to greet the smallest member, shaking hands with her on eye level and impressing her life ever after.

During the sixties we attracted several more new families we attracted several more new families. People were beginning to retire and migrate to this part of the country, looking for a simpler lifestyle. Since Quentin Moore was still postmaster in Hayesville, we were aware of new arrivals in Clay County. However, Jack Watson went farther and reached out into Georgia where there was as yet no Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Atlanta. He visited Young Harris College, Blairsville and Hiawassee and met people everywhere. At the church, hospitality was the keyword. Most of us brought friends to services and to activities as often as we could.

It was important to Jack to make both churches as beautiful as possible. At Good Shepherd the Men's Association finished paneling the concrete walls of the sanctuary. Vick had planted pine trees as a windbreak in back of the church. Now we paneled over the windows on each side of the altar. During the Morning Prayer Service we could no longer watch the birds building their nests in the trees of our back yard

instead of listening to the sermon, and we didn't miss it because of the wonderful liturgy inside. Behind the altar a beautiful white and gold brocade curtain hung on a wooden pole under a walnut valance.

By December 1967, when Bishop Henry came for the Confirmation Service, we were looking much more "church-like". Bud and Caroline Brazil, who were teaching at Young Harris College, were confirmed, as were Alan Moore and Pat Welch. We had learned to scour the countryside for native flowers and greenery appropriate for any season of the year. From that time forward we had beautiful arrangements each Sunday and for special occasions at the church. Hand-made wood furnishings and linens, embroidered by Ruth Moore and others, graced the altar. Our services were filled with an ever-growing sense of the Holy.

Each year we had a Christmas Party as a way of drawing closer together. We wanted to exchange small gifts so we drew names on slips of paper out of a hat, adding a few labeled "guest" so that any extra people we might invite would be included. We set a fifty-cent ceiling on each purchase, although homemade gifts were exempt and welcome. We were delighted with our "books of lifesavers", home-stitched aprons, crocheted potholders, crayons, coloring books and clay ashtrays. We decorated the parish hall tables with colorful cloths, candles and holly. Ruth Moore's father sent candy canes and other goodies for everyone from his home in Nebraska.

After Jim Ledford died in 1962 and Eva and the children moved from Tusquittee to a brick house on the road leading to the church, we began an original and ingenious tradition at Christmas time. The crowning touch of the party was a beautifully decorated tree that we borrowed from the Ledford family. Each year Tommy sat astride the hood of the car proudly holding the tree as Eva drove carefully down the road from their home to place it in the center of the parish hall. We gathered around and sang carols both before and after dinner. After the party the Ledfords returned it to their living room in the same sedate fashion and enjoyed the memories of the church celebration as part of their own Christmas.

Our outreach grew. Each year we chose one or two families in the community to whom we gave special food and gifts wrapped especially for each member of the family. At Easter, we fixed baskets with candy eggs and small toys for families with children. At least one

year at the Thanksgiving Service everyone brought a part of the meal to take to a family in the country. We had asked the family we selected if they would like turkey with all the fixings, home-cooked by members of our congregation and delivered after our service. They were surprised and delighted, and we were glad to do it. The church was filled with the wonderful smells of roasted turkey, hot rolls, pumpkin pie, dressing, cranberry sauce and assorted vegetables. Afterward those who delivered the meal were rewarded with the pleasure of witnessing a family's surprise and enjoyment. I don't remember how many Thanksgivings were that elaborate but we continued to share our holidays with families in Clay County for a number of years.

As many of the congregation as possible attended the Christmas Eve midnight service at Messiah in Murphy. At Good Shepherd for several years Christmas Eve was celebrated at four o'clock in the afternoon. Mr. Hanson assured us that it was midnight in Jerusalem and therefore an appropriate time for us to have Communion. However, after Jack Watson became our yoked priest many of our congregation took part in all the holiday festivities with Messiah. Until we built our second and larger church in 1981 the midnight service on Christmas Eve was always a joint service at Messiah.

We began the Christmas season by decorating the church in Murphy. All our young people and others who had the time and energy came together immediately after the fourth Sunday in Advent to make wreaths and garlands and small cut pine trees. These beautiful greens were divided between Good Shepherd and Messiah to decorate. Both churches were breathtakingly beautiful for the Christmas Season. Several of the young people from Good Shepherd practiced with the choir at Messiah. They sang at the midnight service and many of our congregation celebrated that night with our friends there.

During following years we had more people from Young Harris College and from Hiawassee find and join our family. O.V. Lewis, the Registrar at the college, became a faithful member and reliable auditor of our financial affairs.

Women of the ECW continued to meet at each other's homes. Sometimes we packed ourselves into the Bentzens' trailer; other times we spread out in the Gaudets' elegant home on the Lake. No one wanted to miss the good times we had. Several times Mr. Gaudet played his grand piano for us and Sally told jokes. It was there that we hatched

the idea for raising money for enlarging the church by having a sandwich stand at the Fair in Hiawassee. Sally's enthusiasm about roast beef sandwiches was hard to resist. She was sure we could make a success of selling and satisfy hungry crowds as well.

In 1969 we realized that it was possible to add our other five pews by eliminating the side aisles. Again we scraped, sanded and painted the antique pews, and spread them out to have a center aisle. We extended the iron rail at the front of the pews so that there was assistance for kneelers on both sides. They also served as a place where the smallest children could swing and turn flips after church was over and parish life began.

Sam and Lois Leek and their family arrived and took the front pew on the left side, demonstrating an amazing ability to maintain order throughout the service with five small children. Keeping the tradition we had established when each of the five original families claimed a pew, we usually sat in the same places Sunday after Sunday. So it was immediately apparent when a pew was empty that someone in that family was ill and needed attention. At the back in the folding chairs our single members, couples and visitors held sway. Five or six places gradually expanded to ten or fifteen, as the ten pews filled each Sunday.

The land around the church was no longer farmland. A house stood on each side of the church and property nearby was no longer for sale. Although the neighborhood was still quiet enough to accommodate some unusual activity involving the church, the community was changing.

Our parking lot filled easily. I remember our pleasure when Josephine Wrisley joined us soon after she and John came from Florida. Josephine added an essential Anglican sense of dignity to Good Shepherd. John stayed at home, but Stephen, her infant grandson, always accompanied Josephine. He brought vitality and curiosity to our gatherings. They arrived in their ancient dark green pickup truck. During the service Stephen almost always escaped from his grandmother's grasp, and much to her dismay he crawled up to the altar to see what the minister was doing. Embarrassed, she recovered him quickly but our delight at the new life in the church was boundless. After church Josephine afforded more fun for us all when her ancient vehicle refused to leave the parking lot. We united forces to give it a hearty push off the hill so that the battery would catch hold.

Then off she sailed back to Tusquittee to the sound of our cheers.

The Reverend Jack Watson was great fun. He visited far and wide and became a real member of our family, but he was also very serious about Our Lord and our ways of worshipping. He began at once to train acolytes. At that time, despite Jack's support for their cause, women and even little girls were excluded from participation in the services. So from our group of little boys Jack chose those of the right age to be acolytes and trained them carefully and well. When it was time to prepare for confirmation he started classes many months in advance of the bishop's visit. I understand from my own children that his preparation classes were an early Education- for- Ministry in miniature. Each year there were people ready for confirmation. Sometimes the service was at Good Shepherd and sometimes, when Bishop Henry's time was exceptionally short we joined Messiah for Confirmation.

Every year we had a special Epiphany Community Service that I think the Vicar wrote and arranged. The service told the story of the spread of Christianity throughout the world. The service began in darkness. As each additional country or area touched by the gospel message a candle was lit. The story of our own particular congregation followed with additional light as we grew and spread the Word. It always included an account of how we reached out into the community, the diocese and the world. The services reminded us that we were always part of something much larger than Clay County.

As the national church prepared for the revision of the prayer book we studied the "green book" revisions for extended periods, switching to copies of each change as it was proposed. When the national church finally reached agreement on the new liturgy we were ready. Most of us even understood why and how the new services reflected practices in the early church.

One year we visited Convention at All Soul's Parish in Asheville. Two delegates, Monroe Wilson and Quentin Moore, took their families along so that we could explore Asheville with its indoor swimming pools, museums, shops and restaurants while the men felt free to enjoy the serious work of the Diocese. Later some of us attended the election of Bishop Weinbauer to be the Bishop Coadjutor. When he visited Murphy for confirmation of candidates from both churches, Rev. Jack invited the Youth Group from both parishes to his home for

refreshments and discussion. Later at the consecration of Bishop Weinbauer, young people from both of Jack's churches were chosen to sing in the choir. Other members were acolytes and readers. Everyone felt comfortable in participating at the Civic Center in Asheville because they already knew Bishop Weinbauer. We felt, at last, a genuine part of the Diocese.

One year the anniversary of Monroe's and my marriage fell on a Sunday. When we went up for communion and knelt at the altar rail to receive the bread and wine, Jack laid a hand on each of our heads. He prayed fervently that God might bless our marriage for many years to come, that Jesus might guide our steps and that we might be filled with the Holy Spirit. I don't remember the exact words of his beautiful prayer, but I do remember the warmth that filled my soul. For days following, the actual warm spot on my head and across my shoulders brought me wondrous joy. The experience sustained us for many years to follow.

Financially we were a responsible congregation, paying off our loan and pledging to the Diocese. Gradually we assumed more and more of a share of the expenses that we divided with the Church of the Messiah. Our ECW divided the profits of the yearly Bazaar and other fund-raisers in thirds. One part we allocated to works of the Church in the world outside of Clay County. One third we used for outreach within the county. The other third we used for much need improvements at Good Shepherd itself.

As we moved further into the seventies we began to talk about expanding the building. To our surprise we discovered that the land surrounding the church had been bought and houses encircled us. We could not even enlarge our parking lot where there was now insufficient space for cars. One couple who wanted to come to church gave up and went to Murphy instead. We began to set aside a contingency fund for buying land and building anew.

To help we used the money from our sandwich sale during the Annual Hiwassee Fair. It was held at that time near the square on the old school grounds in the center of Hiwassee. It was August 1970. At the church the Weatherbys were a new family with very small children. They had a house on a side street in the middle of Hiwassee. Bishop Weinbauer had confirmed Mr. Weatherby along with John and Florence Wilson on June 28, 1970. The family offered to help the

Sandwich Shop Project by storing the sandwiches in their refrigerator until they were needed for sale. The young people ran back and forth supplying fresh sandwiches, as we needed them. With all the enthusiasm and hope we could muster we made many, many roast beef sandwiches and probably some large ham and cheese. We set up shop across from the Fair on the Main Street in Hiawassee. Goodness, how hard everyone worked, changing shifts every few hours and doing our very best to make money. It was fun and mildly successful but we ended up with many leftover sandwiches that we took home to freeze. For years to follow, we not able to look a roast beef sandwich in the face.

We began to look for new land, agonizing over the prices and the dearth of locations, suitable and affordable. Of course every one of us had a different opinion about the future: what we needed and what we wanted. It was at this point in 1975 that after eight years of ministry at Good Shepherd and Messiah the Reverend Jack Watson and his new wife, Tari, received a call to a church in Laurens, South Carolina. When, on one Sunday in July, Reverend Jack told us they were leaving, the family at Good Shepherd was torn between heartbreak at our loss and thanksgiving for all that our Vicar from Florida had done for us.



## Chapter 6 - Relocating at Last (1976-1981)

For the rest of 1975 we had lay reader-led Morning Prayer again while our vestry consulted with the Bishop and searched for a replacement. The Reverend Brad Rockwood, a second career priest straight out of seminary at Sewanee, came to fill that opening at Good Shepherd. Brad and his wife, Kay, were good choices: both were craftspeople who had visited the Folk School and both were interested in building their own home in the Pine Log section of Brasstown.

Several retired couples, including Col. Bill Bell and his wife Kathleen and their teenage daughter, Jennifer, joined us about that time. Bill was accustomed to command positions and took his responsibilities very seriously. He immediately assumed a leadership role in Clay County and became Junior Warden for the church as well. He was so conscientious in his duties that he changed the locks on the front door and kept the only key. As we were all accustomed to coming and going any and all days of the week, this caused considerable consternation. Clay County is very different from an Army base. Bill backed down gracefully and adjusted his expectations accordingly. He continued to relish participation in church activities and devoted much of his time to the search for land in the county.

We were further blessed with members who had been communicants at St. John's Parish in College Park, Georgia. Several already had ties to north Georgia. Among them was Edna Richards. A wonderful teller of tales, she loved to teach Bible stories and had played that role at St. John's. She was also an enthusiastic driver as well and was never intimidated by unexplored byways. On her first visit to find Good Shepherd she drove from Hiawassee to Hayesville. There she sped up US Highway 64 all the way to Franklin before finally turning around to find Good Shepherd Church on West Myers Chapel Road in Hayesville. She always enjoyed recounting her adventures with snapping dark eyes and a charming smile. When she wasn't driving to Mississippi, Alabama or Georgia to see family and friends she was helping to many people in Hiawassee and at Good Shepherd. Edna was one of our most entertaining members to occupy the front pew each Sunday.

Barbara Holt arrived one winter to take an art course at Young Harris and test the environment in Hayesville before her

husband, Ben, retired as a Delta pilot. The two tall good-looking Holts came just in time to assume major responsibilities in the church as Senior Warden, lay reader, and expert altar guild chairman. Both Bill and Barbara looked to Bena Burns as their authority on local customs because Bena had spent her childhood in western North Carolina and north Georgia before joining St. John's Parish in College Park. These four members of St. John's in College Park became enthusiastic and faithful members of Good Shepherd, ready to encourage us to build a larger church.

The Reverend Brad Rockwood was a specialist in small church management and a consultant to the Diocese on the subject. In our yoked relationship with Messiah he concentrated on maintaining a balance and a working relationship between the two churches, actually advising new couples in the area about which church they should attend. As a way of uniting them he initiated a summer picnic service at the Recreation Park pavilion overlooking Lake Chatuge in Hayesville and a Rogation Day Service at the Folk School Open House in Brasstown. He also drew together the two Episcopal Churches and two Roman Catholic Churches in both counties together to sponsor DeSoto Square, a low cost housing development financed by the government, with a governing board representing the churches. Brad continued to involve both Messiah and Good Shepherd in joint projects for the ten years he served both churches.

Earle Seaverns remembers "Sally and I came to Hayesville in 1979 and bought a cottage in Pinelog Village. We met Hannah Minter who was probably Good Shepherd's first "volunteer" secretary and took her to Morning Prayer Services at the first Good Shepherd Church. We knew right off that this was where we wanted to retire. I remember being here occasionally in those years and I would "spell" Ruth Moore who played the old pump organ. Soon after he came to our church Jake Jacoby put a washing machine motor on the bellows of that organ to give it more volume. It also helped the organist not to sweat quite so profusely!"

In the late 1970's Brad Rockwood began an Education for Ministry program open to all. He held classes in the living room at the Folk School in Brasstown, a midway point convenient for both congregations. Several people from Good Shepherd enrolled, including Ben Holt and Bill Bell. I joined in 1981 when I retired from

Smoky Mountain Area Mental Health. There were at least as many people from Messiah, as from Good Shepherd, enough to justify two mentors, dividing beginners from those in the last two years of the four-year program. The group from Messiah included Steve Holcomb and two others who later became deacons in Episcopal churches. By 1985 most of the Messiah students had graduated. We moved EFM classes to Good Shepherd with Steve as mentor for a year and I as assistant. The next year I became mentor to a continuing group of wonderful students at Good Shepherd.

Anne Mitchell remembers starting EFM just after she came back to church after many years' absence. She was struggling with spiritual issues that came from differences she experienced at various denominations over the years. Earnestly one evening she asked me "How do you KNOW if you have faith?" She remembers that I replied, "Well, Anne, I don't know what to tell you. Just act like you do and maybe it will come to you." She did and obviously faith did come! What would any of us do without our faith?

Four years after becoming our rector in 1976, Brad Rockwood persuaded the congregation of Good Shepherd to buy our property on Highway 64 east of Hayesville. We sold our first church to Jim and Virginia Whiting, members who were retiring from Florida. With approximately sixty communicants, savings in the building fund had reached \$66,000. We bought and paid for land in the Herbert Hills development for our new church. Our plans were drawn. Sadly, though, in January 1981, before we broke ground for the building, another of our founding fathers, Quentin Moore, died suddenly. We not only lost Quentin, who had seen us through early years as lay reader, senior warden, treasurer and stalwart friend, but also his family. Ruth was overwhelmed with grief. She had faithfully played our organ year after year, and their son, Alan, had been one of our first acolytes. They both gradually stopped coming to church services in the new building although they remained loyal members and attended many other church activities.

The Diocese offered a loan of \$20,000 and a grant of \$10,000 for the new church. On a windy morning, March 29, 1981, the Reverend Brad Rockwood and a band of hardy parishioners held a ground-breaking ceremony on the side of the hill. Included in the ceremony were Jake and Connie Jacoby who had recently moved to Hayesville from Cleveland, Ohio. Jake was retired from the

Ohio Highway Department. He brought with him from Cleveland two large metal road signs: one that read “One Way” and the other “Do Not Enter”. He put them up to direct traffic on the driveways to our property. Several of us felt that “Do Not Enter” gave a message we did not intend. However, “One Way, Do Not Enter” remains in place to this day. Connie had volunteered in the library in Cleveland and organized our first church library. Several years later Jan Rosser, their daughter, became our organist for a few years.

That spring and summer the building process went smoothly and quickly, overseen every day by vestry member, Charles Ott. Chuck utilized his years of experience with a hardware store that he owned in Florida before he and his wife, Billie, retired to Hayesville. The building contractor was O. A. Blankenship and the architect was Eric Townsend. They both appreciated Chuck’s working knowledge of construction, his skill and his experience in guiding workers and observers with grace.

Many in the congregation helped with the completion of the nave and sacristy. Even before the building was finished Bob and Doris Etlar stopped to say they wanted to join the church and would be glad to help with the work on the building. Immediately they volunteered to paint the roughly built front doors of the narthex Episcopal Red. Bob and Doris were retired, and “masters of many trades”. Bob is an electrician and carpenter and volunteered in that capacity for many years. Bob and Doris were each Junior Warden for two years at one time or another. For twenty-one years the Etlars took part in every aspect of church life from the practical to the hospitable, to the pastoral and the liturgical.

The nave was designed to seat one hundred people. Friends from St. John’s Parish in College Park donated the original sixteen pews. The church was surrounded by beautiful views of the country and we resolved to have glass windows open to that beauty on both sides of the nave. Behind the altar a full-sized simple wooden cross divides a huge clear window looking to the Tusquitee Mountains. Bena Burns, mother of Beejee Hampton and Peggy Moran, gave the walnut pulpit and lectern, hand-crafted by Michael Wright. The walnut wood altar rail from the first church was extended and moved into place. Bishop William Weinbauer dedicated the building to the Glory of God in a service of thanksgiving on October 19, 1981.

The lower level was largely unfinished except for a beautiful kitchen, the gift of Albert and Mary Bauer. The undercroft space provided room for multiple parish activities, including Sunday School. In one corner a windowless ten-by-ten-foot room was designated as a priest's office and accessed through the main room. It was not used by the priest as long as he maintained his office and most of the church records for both churches in Murphy. It was somewhat damp and airless and had a closet that held vestments for acolytes, choir, lay readers and priest. On Sunday mornings everyone robed wherever space was available as the congregation streamed into this parish hall in preparation for the service at nine-fifteen.

In an opposite corner a narrow enclosed stairway led up to the nave and the narthex entry. In front of that wall was the secretary's desk, telephone, file cabinets, copying machine, etc. Margaret Peters volunteered as Secretary and did the bulletins and a monthly newsletter. Often she spread papers fresh from the copier flat on the carpeting in her corner so that the dampness would take the curl out of the paper and it would lie flat. Margaret was the first of three faithful secretaries who coped with inadequate time and space. Jody George and Renee Williams followed her. This office arrangement lasted for ten years until the renovation in 1991 when the office became a trailer overlooking the driveway leading to the church. Renee has many a tale to tell of her experiences as she perched on a high stool with a drafting table for a desk and the Rector's office as well as all the church records in file cabinets behind her.

Elsewhere in the open space on the lower level there were tables, folding chairs, audio-visual equipment, library shelves and a beautiful cherry wood children's altar, handmade by Monroe Wilson and donated by the three daughters of Bena Burns. Every week Bena put fresh flowers in the little vases the small shelves high on each side behind the altar. For Sunday school the children went to separate tables. Sometimes sheets hanging from wires stretched across the room curtained groups from each other.

The relocation of the church drew many new people. Mary Anne Koos had watched the building process everyday during the summer of 1981. She was especially interested because her neighbor O. A. Blankenship was our contractor. That summer Mary Anne drove a van for handicapped people, and as she drove them home from a visit to Hayesville, she often stopped at the church to give them and herself

a glimpse of the progress in the building. She had been interested in the Episcopal Church for some time but hesitated to join because the first little church seemed too crowded. Mary Anne began her faithful membership and ministry that year and has continued active in many capacities ever since.

Soon after the church was dedicated in October 1981, Pat and Paul Jordan joined our congregation. In November Pat took on the responsibility for the Children's Sunday School and Youth Group. Pat wrote the following:

"When my husband, Paul, retired from the Navy we came back to Clay County to build a home and live the rest of our lives. Paul was originally from Brasstown and had grown up in Clay County. We had some land that adjoined his parents' and his grandparents' places. I knew that there were two Episcopal churches in the area, one in Murphy and one in Hayesville. As in our previous years I had never had the choice of a church, I decided I could do a little "church shopping". I went first to Murphy. We still had an eight-year-old at home, so I was interested in Church School for her. I had worked in Christian Education for the past twenty years and really missed it. Messiah in Murphy was a nice little church, but the people were not particularly friendly.

The next week I went to Good Shepherd in Hayesville. After the service I was invited to come downstairs for coffee hour and there I met Margaret Peters. I asked her if they had a Sunday school for children and she said, 'Not yet. Would you like to start one?' Since I seem not to be able to say 'no', I said that, of course, I would.

Soon after Brad Rockwood called me and asked if he could come to the house and meet with me. The church had just moved into the 'new building'. We had not even had the dedication yet. We decided to start the Sunday School on the first Sunday in Advent. We would make Advent wreaths, talk about Advent and follow the lectionary for the year. Pat Bonanno and Mary Strange were among the first Sunday school teachers who worked with me. When the time arrived to begin I was very nervous. I didn't know how many children to expect. I had no idea how much material we would need to make the wreaths. I collected holly, candles, clay, paper plates, ribbon and all the things we would need to make wreaths.

We went to church early that morning to set things up in plenty of

time. I spread it all out and then realized that we had nothing with which to cut the holly. There were some blunt ended scissors for the children, but I looked around and couldn't find anything better.

In those years we had the Communion Service only on the first and third Sundays of the month. Morning Prayer was on the other Sundays. On Communion Sundays we had class downstairs first and went up to church after the sermon for Communion. On Morning Prayer Sundays we went to church first and come down for class when it was time for the sermon. This Sunday was a Morning Prayer Sunday so we went to church first; ready to leave before the sermon. The whole time I was at church I prayed that I would be able to cut the holly with those blunt edged scissors. The holly was pretty tough.

The time came for the sermon. Pat and I and four children rose and went downstairs for our first Sunday School Class. We said a short prayer, introduced ourselves and told the children what we were going to do. I made a comment about the holly being a little difficult to cut and very sticky. They would need to be careful because we only had these blunt edged scissors and they would probably need some help. Then I picked up a piece of holly. Lo and behold under that very first piece was a pair of pruning shears! It was exactly what we needed to cut the holly. We had our first 'God Moment' right there on the spot. To this day I do not know where those pruning shears came from, but I am grateful that God sent His Angel or maybe actually brought the shears Himself. Who knows?

That was the start of Good Shepherd Sunday school in the 'new building' in November 1981. We continued to meet each week and began to grow. We added a 'Youth Group' and at one time grew to about sixty children and young people. As our children grew and graduated from high school I decided it was time to move on so I handed the reins over to someone else. Pat Bonanno took over Sunday school and did a wonderful job. Ann Bearse later joined the church and took over the whole Christian Education Program at Good Shepherd, even adding the Adult Sunday School classes between services."

In 1982 Good Shepherd received the Governor's Award for community projects in Clay County.

At this time a number of people who had been hesitating to join when we were in a small church building decided to come. There were many Lutherans in the area that found no church home and chose to

come to the Episcopal Church partly because of the similarity in our liturgies. Kathleen Norris in her book “Amazing Grace, A Vocabulary of Faith” writes in her chapter on “Belief, Doubt and Sacred Ambiguity”, “It is in acts of repetition that seem senseless to the rational mind that belief comes. Doubts are put to rest, religious conversion takes hold, and one feels at home in a community of faith, and yet it is not mindless at all. It is head working inseparably with heart; whole body religion.” This is an excellent description of one of the benefits of liturgy. It explains also our custom of kneeling to pray, sitting to listen and standing to praise.

One of the families that joined toward the conclusion of Brad’s ministry to us was the Heilner family. About that time Jennifer went away to college, but Elizabeth became a faithful acolyte. Anne became our organist. George was a lector and faithful communicant. Both he and Anne were stalwart graduates of EFM. George’s contribution to the story of the church reflects the effect of his religious inheritance on his choice to bring his family into Good Shepherd. I think it is an example of what drew many families to this Episcopal Church.

In his story, “My Coming to be Part of the Flock”, George writes the following:

“Throughout my years growing up in Pennsylvania, attendance and participation in church was an important part of our family life. It was the Lutheran Church with encouragement in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School a focus of early youth. At about age of twelve, enrollment in two years of Catechism marked the transition to fuller membership. After high school I attended a Lutheran affiliated college with a beautiful chapel. Regular attendance at chapel was a requirement for graduation. The organist who was quite German and head of the music department was extraordinary at keyboard. I took two years of Russian language and two semesters of Russian literature with a delightful instructor who was Latvian and a Lutheran minister. Later, he married us in that beautiful college chapel.

Then there were a few years for me in the Navy without much church. We returned to my hometown and renewed religious activity. There was a period of Sunday school teaching and of course both of the girls were baptized. Completion of graduate school saw us move to North Carolina. There we attended the Lutheran Church in Andrews for a few months.

For several years then there was no involvement in church during which I became aware of a spiritual void in my life and, I believe, in the life of our family as well. Search began for a place to fill the void and we considered several denominations with some appeal found in all. At our mutual place of employment I made the acquaintance of Ellie Wilson and in subsequent social gatherings I came to know her husband and children as well. There must have been some discussion of church for I began to ponder the Church of the Good Shepherd. Both Monroe and Ellie Wilson manifested qualities I admired and I decided that if there were more people such as them at Good Shepherd, it might be a fitting place to worship. I visited a few times and found the priest, Brad Rockwood, as well as the parish family very warm and inviting. Coming from a liturgical format in the Lutheran Church with ritual as well, I enjoyed the order of service. The church building was aesthetically pleasant and quite what I expected of a sanctuary with a most comforting simple and bucolic atmosphere.

Other events followed to affirm my decision and commitment. I became involved in classes in order to be confirmed in the Episcopal Church. This included reading a book and meeting with Bill Bell, the member of the church who had offered to provide instruction. I enjoyed learning more about the history of the Episcopal Church and I was impressed with Bill Bell's sincerity. He obviously took his responsibility very seriously.

Then I had an opportunity to be a reader for the lessons on Sundays, which gave me the satisfaction of actually being involved in the service. There was always someone available to offer assistance and support. Several years later I enjoyed more formal learning through the program of Education for Ministry, mentored for two of the four years by my friend, Ellie Wilson. This marked a very significant time for me. Again I was impressed with the sincerity and commitment that Ellie showed in being a mentor to us. The evenings were marked by most poignant discussions, touching on spiritual growth and other aspects of life.

There certainly have been many other positive experiences at Good Shepherd - the beautiful midnight Christmas Eve Service, church at the lake with Messiah joining us, discussions during fellowship time, at first downstairs in the 1981 building, then in the new fellowship hall with the many fine people in the parish family.”

In 1985 Brad appointed a committee to explore the financial possibilities of having our own priest. (H.O.P.E.) when he retired. He had shepherded the two congregations for ten years, had seen Good Shepherd move, build and grow. He had initiated activities and maintained ties between the two churches in addition to preaching, teaching and pastoring. He would continue to be a consultant to the Diocese on small church growth. He planned to live in Brasstown and supply other small churches, as he was needed. The committee met and discussed and examined alternatives. Finally we felt that there was sufficient hope that we could manage financially. When Brad's retirement was final on January 1, 1986, the congregation voted to separate from the yoked parish we had enjoyed with Messiah for more than thirty years, and establish our independence by calling our own priest.

Two licensed lay readers, Ben Holt and Bill Bell assumed responsibility for Morning Prayer Services that year. We formed a clergy search committee. Then we repaid our loan from the Diocese and continued to build our separate fund toward adding facilities for Sunday School classes. We occasionally had a supply priest who consecrated wine for communion. Steve Holcomb, visiting Deacon, then administered the service.

Turner Guidry recalls one occasion just after we had received the gift of a beautiful new silver cruet for communion wine. He writes: "Do you remember when Steve Holcomb administered the reserve sacrament of wine that had been stored in the new silver cruet. It had oxidized into an unusual green, bitter- tasting substance. Nobody knew it until it was time to serve Communion. Amazed at the change, one by one, the entire congregation drank it down with mild grimaces. No one ever missed a beat." Yes, Turner, we remember: "What a flock of sheep!"

Our clergy search resulted in three interviews without much enthusiasm from the search committee or the person interviewed. Then we interviewed Herb and Charlotte Waldrop. They both seemed eager to come to Hayesville. They assured us that if we called one of them we would "get two for the price of one." We were operating on a tight budget and needed to expand our facilities, so the offer was very tempting. Herb was experienced as a Methodist minister who had recently joined the Episcopal Church and completed a year at Duke Seminary to become a priest. Charlotte was a lifelong Episcopalian and one of the courageous women who was called to be a priest before the

entire membership in the Episcopal Church was quite ready for women priests. She had completed her studies at Duke and Virginia Theological Seminary. In June she was ordained a Deacon in Virginia.

Praying that the Holy Spirit would be with us in this adventurous step, we reached a consensus that we should call Charlotte to be our first full time priest in the hope that Messiah would call Herb. We received the approval of Bishop Weinhauer and the Standing Committee of the Diocese. In December 1986, we had a beautiful evening service in which Bishop Weinhauer ordained Charlotte Rector at the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd. The setting sun, God's own light, slanted across the church filled with the entire congregation, guests, Charlotte's family and many friends from Asheville.

Now we were on our own. We had our midnight Christmas Eve service at Good Shepherd with our own priest. There was no longer a need to divide a priest's time between the two churches. That Christmas we were especially thankful for the many years the Church of the Messiah and the Church of the Good Shepherd had shared a priest's schedule generously and with consideration. We are thankful also for other churches and individuals who have used our sanctuary. Rachel Baughn shares a memory from these years in her essay, "Mountaintop Walk to Emmaus and Good Shepherd".

"In a very real sense, Good Shepherd's ecumenical outreach in the healing ministry got a good start in the early 1980's through Mountaintop Walk to Emmaus. Harry Baughn and I met when Hinton Center became home to the fledgling Mountain Cursillo. The Cursillo, or 'short course in Christianity', was sponsored by the Upper Room and was later renamed 'Walk to Emmaus' because of copyright considerations.

As you may know, a pivotal moment in each weekend Cursillo comes on Saturday night when the participants are transported to an undisclosed location. There, friends and relatives singing and holding candles after having celebrated communion on their behalf surprise them. Then the candidates are left in the dark for their own period of mediation, reconciliation and prayer. In the early years of Mountaintop, this service moved around to various churches in the area, but it wasn't long before everyone agreed that Good Shepherd's sanctuary was the most conducive to this important spiritual work.

Not only were Harry and I married in Good Shepherd in the

presence of Emmaus friends, and members of the Messiah and Good Shepherd congregations (shortly before Brad Rockwood retired), but we had the ministry of making these candlelight services ‘invisible’ to Good Shepherd. For several years we watched from our house across the pasture for the headlights to tell us the Emmaus ‘pilgrims’ were headed back to Hinton Center. Then we would drive over to the church with our cleaning supplies to straighten up the pews and, more importantly, iron the carpet to get rid of the inevitable spilled wax – often returning home at 1 o’clock in the morning!

Since Mountaintop Emmaus has progressed to dripless candleholders, most of our congregation may not realize that this ministry of hosting the Mountaintop candlelight service continues to this day. The significant spiritual experiences that have taken place in this sanctuary over the past 20 years and at least 115 weekends are incalculable. The Upper Room is an ecumenical body, and hundreds of Christians of all denominations have laid down guilt, anger, unforgiveness, fear, pride and innumerable burdens and obstacles to God’s love at the altar of Good Shepherd, in a ministry that goes largely unseen by the Good Shepherd congregation. In fact, the Saturday night communion service has almost outgrown our sanctuary, as every seat is filled.

Not long ago, Harry and I were blessed to witness a Cherokee blessing sung in the sanctuary by a Native American who at last truly understood and accepted that Christ died even for him, not just for white missionaries. He understood that he was loved, not theoretically, but personally. If these walls could replay what they have seen, we would be humbled by the gratitude and love for the simplicity and beauty of our sanctuary felt by these strangers to us, who came to Good Shepherd and met Christ. We know, because when we tell them what church we go to, their eyes get big and they say in wonder, ‘You go to that church?’ And then their eyes grow distant and they fall silent as they remember.”



**Church of the Good Shepherd**

**1981**



### **Choir at Good Shepherd 1989**

Front Left to Right: Edie Kleinpeter, Anne Mitchell, and Anne Menasian

Back Left to Right: Patrick Mclean, Mary Ann Koos, Pat Werdin, Irish Mulcahy, Doris Etlar, Alberta Denton, Earle Seaverns, and Sally Seaverns.

## Chapter 7 - No Longer Yoked With Messiah (1986-95)

We changed in many ways in the years with the Reverend Brad Rockwood and were now ready to settle down. Although we felt confident in moving ahead we were not totally prepared for the new experiences we met in 1986. The Reverend Charlotte Waldrop, our first rector was enthusiastic, but had just graduated from seminary, and we were a congregation that had determined our ministry for many years with only gentle guidance from part time priests and devoted lay people.

That same year two new couples arrived, joined the church and became very active in our ministry. The Mitchells came to Hiawassee and the Wolfs moved from Atlanta. As soon as Anne and Bill Wolf were settled they welcomed us all with an Open House Celebration on New Year's Eve, 1986. This introduced us to their custom of entertaining. I invited Charlotte to go with me on that New Year's Eve. We wound our way to the Wolf's home in the Gum Log Section of Towns County, Georgia, for a bountiful repast and a wonderful time.

Bill and Anne extended their gracious gift for hospitality in many ways. Anne writes that she remembers their first potluck at the church. "We sat with the Wrisleys and the Wilsons at the 'W' table." She writes, "Bill started the 'Grazers' when he was on the vestry. We picked the name because of the Good Shepherd sheep grazing. I know that at the first 'kick-off' meeting we had spaghetti. I went to the library to see if they had a recipe for spaghetti for fifty and they did. We asked about serving wine and it was okay as long as we had other beverages. We drew the names of everyone who wished to participate and made up groups of six or eight, stacking the deck with the name of a vestry person in each group. Then we rotated between couples for dinner one night each month."

At the end of the rotation we shuffled the groups and visited other homes. Bill gave a sales pitch one Sunday morning after we had grazed for a couple of years. More couples were needed. He pleaded for everyone who had not yet joined to become part of "Grazers" and have the opportunity to sample "Ellie Wilson's pirogies". I was flattered that he should advertise me as a good cook, but puzzled because I had no idea of what constituted a pirogie. I went home and looked it up in the dictionary. It evidently is a small Eastern European pastry filled with

meat or potatoes, but I still had no idea how to make and serve them at a Grazer Dinner. It seems that Bill had enjoyed them as a child growing up in Pittsburgh and was homesick for this delicious example of Russian cuisine. His appeal worked because everyone laughed and more couples signed up. The Grazers thrived and we all became better acquainted with each other as more and more people came to Good Shepherd.

Also, in 1986, Anne and Hugh Mitchell retired from the military and returned to Anne's family land in Hiawassee. For many years New Year's Day was their time to invite many people to start the year right with black-eyed peas and greens. Hugh took a course in masonry and Anne opened a wine shop in Hiawassee. One evening when Monroe and I invited the Mitchells and the Wolfs for supper, Hugh took the opportunity to practice his masonry skills by repairing our rock fireplace in Brasstown.

There were many times like that in homes and at church where we combined fellowship with ministry. Through the years, and at least once each year, the church family came together to work at the church and ended the time with rejoicing in food and fellowship.

Later in 1986, Lou White moved from Virginia to land that had belonged to her family on Tusquittee. I will never forget Lou's courage. Though recently widowed, she made the long trip, driving alone down the interstate highways to North Carolina. She built her beautiful home on the mountain with a view down the valley toward Hayesville. Her long acquaintance with the Episcopal Church made Lou a quiet thoughtful leader, Vestry member, treasurer, planner and Senior Warden at Good Shepherd.

We began to gather summer families from Florida. Caroline and Harry Dunkle became as active in the church as any year-around couple. One morning Caroline was officiating at Coffee Hour when one of those "God Moments" that bring old friends together occurred. Betty and George Harper were in line for doughnuts and coffee when Betty and Caroline recognized each other across the counter. Many years earlier they were classmates at Duke University. They had gone different ways after college and lost track of each other. In Hiawassee and Hayesville they made up for lost years playing lots of bridge while Harry and George played golf.

In one of the first years after Charlotte came she enlisted the help

of Ken and Dot Ament in planning trips for as many in the congregation as wanted to see other places of interest. The first I remember was our retreat with Charlotte and Herb to Valle Crucis. There is a great picture of the group gathered in front of the door to the undercroft in the lower parking lot of the church. Present were Charlotte and Herb, Ben and Barbara Holt, Lou White, Doris Etler, Monroe and Ellie Wilson, Ruth and Ray Gran, Alberta Denton, Caroline and Harry Dunkle, Margaret Peters, Mary Strange, Lib Eppes, Ken and Dot Ament, Virginia Whiting, about twenty in all.

We went especially to see the frescoes, painted by an itinerant artist at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Glendale Springs, North Carolina, and at St. Mary's in West Jefferson. The artist was just beginning to paint frescoes and offered his services in several places before these tiny churches welcomed him. Many of his models were local people who patiently sat or stood for him and are pictured there.

Everyone in the church was invited to the old Mission School in the mountains near the Virginia border, in the Vale of the Cross. We drove up collectively and arrived one evening just in time to get settled before supper. The Mission and School were established in 1842. As an Episcopal girl's boarding school the Mission House was built of wood in a rambling style. Across the front was a long porch, wide enough for a generous row of large rocking chairs facing a view of the valley and the mountains beyond. Inside there were offices, several large gathering rooms and, in an adjoining building, kitchen and dining room. Wide wooden stairs led to dormitory rooms on three floors.

When we arrived in the late 1980's the building retained much of its ancient rough charm. It had not been updated. On each floor there were bedrooms with five or six cots in each. A few small bathrooms and shower rooms were scattered about between some rooms or at the end of the halls, as antique plumbing would allow. After registering we were invited to choose our own rooms. We wandered from place to place as some of us looked for a single room that, of course, was non-existent. Finally the singles that craved privacy managed each to select a bed with an ample surrounding of empty cots in a room they liked. The couples had less trouble finding rooms adjoining another congenial couple and sharing a bath.

We unpacked, went to supper and then to the front porch for Evening Prayer and singing. The next day we visited the fresco

churches and the Mast General Store and other shops in the village. Dot Ament writes, about the trip and adds, “That was when Ken and I really got to know other people better and felt like part of the church family.”

It was good to slip into Holy Cross Episcopal Church next door to the Mission School, to hike and read about Bishop Ives. He was the Bishop of North Carolina in the mid 1800’s and supervised all of western North Carolina. He sent the Reverend Henry Prout to Valle Crucis in 1842 to found the mission, build the church and school. Our two days were a wonderful time away from home and we all went back to Hayesville happy.

In May 1989, Dottie Haskins and Evelyn Gantnier co-chaired a fashion show at a restaurant in Hiwassee called Ann’s Place. Dot Ament remembers it clearly because all the models were members of the church and she was one of them. A highlight of the show was Edie Kleinpeter’s opening song. The show was the production of the Episcopal Church Women for the benefit of the Organizational Fund, according to the newspaper clipping that carried a report, and which Dot Ament kept for posterity.

Later that year Ken planned a trip on the Great Smoky Mountain Railway. However the train steam engine broke down and at the last minute Ken was able to call the church and warn the eight o’clock congregation that the trip was canceled. It was rescheduled for the following year. This next trip together in 1990 was primarily designed to include the children. An excursion train ran from Andrews to the Nantahala Outdoor Center. It was a large group and Ken reserved several cars for us. We drove to Andrews where we picnicked before boarding the train. It took us chugging up to Topton, down and across a small upper stretch of Fontana Lake, through the Nantahala Gorge, “The Land of the Noonday Sun.” There we could look down on people tubing and rafting on the river all the way to the Outdoor Center. We climbed down with train legs stiff and sore and walked them around until they felt normal again before boarding the train for the trip back. We enjoyed that train ride and the chance to visit with each other up and down the cars as we passed through the country. Late that afternoon, tired and dirty with soot from the steam engine we arrived back in Andrews and headed home. I don’t remember how many other trips we took under Ken’s expert leadership, but they all served to unite us more and more into a community of faith.

Later that year, probably at the beginning of Advent, Charlotte came back from a clergy gathering with the Bishop. She scheduled an open forum for all in the church that would be willing to discuss current issues in our present day society. It was an interesting meeting. The high spot for me was my meeting with Ginny Musselwhite! We gathered at a round table and were asked to choose a partner we didn't know very well. Ginny and I agreed that despite the fact that we each knew many people in the church we probably didn't really know each other.

Ginny was born and raised in South Georgia and I in the suburbs of New York City. She had been a buyer for a large clothing shop in Thomasville, Georgia. I had taught in a private school in the city during the war. We both knew New York City very well. She had spent much time in the Sixth Avenue Garment District, but she knew all the famous highlights of the city as well. We had a wonderful time comparing notes on our experiences and our opinions. As a result we became fast and close friends. Ginny was the most gracious southern lady I could imagine with manners and know-how equal to any occasion. By that time in my life I was a mountain girl and a career woman, always too busy to worry about social graces and flower arrangements. Ginny and I shared deeply our love of family and friends. She took me into her hospitable heart and I loved her dearly. For us that evening was a huge success.

Ginny and Otie always sat in the front pew on the left side, but they usually managed to greet newcomers before church began. In 1987 Ginny welcomed and attracted the attention of Ella and Frank Angelillo on their first Sunday. Ella and Frank came to the church for the first time right after moving to Young Harris from New Jersey by way of Florida. As we lined up in the aisle to go out the nave into the narthex I remember greeting Ella and asking her name.

"Angelillo", she said, "angel with an 'i', two 'll's and an 'o'." With that clear thinking and sense of humor neither Ella nor Frank could be overlooked. They felt welcomed and settled in to work. They were both confirmed when the bishop visited in 1989. Frank was soon elected to vestry and later became senior warden. He was active in the Men's Club and a faithful visitor to sick friends.

Ella remembers with pleasure that she and Mary Anne Koos worked on a Seder Supper together. We substituted Seder Suppers for

the usual Maundy Thursday service for several years to better acquaint us all with our Jewish heritage. Later that year Ella volunteered to have an Italian Dinner. She is a superb cook and the meal was delicious, complete in every detail down to the red wine. With amusement as she and Mary Anne cleared the tables at the conclusion of the evening they found cash tips for the waiters! The ECW reaped a harvest for a favorite outreach project!

Another active couple joined us from Florida in the late Eighties: Mary and Bob Gaunt! Mary was a lifelong member of the Society of Friends, a Quaker, until she was confirmed as an Episcopalian in recent years. Bob is a lifelong Episcopalian. What a combination of workers blessed us with their arrival! In the church they took on many tasks such as addressing monthly newsletters, continuing to do it faithfully for years. Bob was both electrician and handyman. He took over maintenance as he was needed, but you'll have to wait until later in this story to read about that because in 1999 Bill DuBose wrote a beautiful piece in the Highland Churchman to celebrate Bob's ninetieth birthday that year.

Not only are Mary and Bob participants in every phase of church work, but they also give time generously in the community. Mary has been a volunteer at the Public Library for years. She bakes cookies to take with her on her scheduled Thursday every week. Both Mary and Bob have been active in Licklog Players, the Community Theater. Mary is an actress and has had many a mature role in plays there through the years. However, she also sews costumes and works on scenery with Bob. All this is in addition to their home and garden on Old Highway 64 West. It supplies not only their needs but also enough for many neighbors and friends as well. In quiet ways Mary and Bob have been leaven in our congregation ever since their arrival in 1988.

As early as 1984, it was apparent that we needed additional space for Church School. All indebtedness had been retired. The congregation had moved from the status of self-supporting mission to parish and was ready to consider the possibility of calling a full time priest. A Church School Fund was established and later named The Redevelopment Fund. Land up the hill adjacent to the church was purchased in 1987.

One of the gifts our rector, Charlotte, brought to Good Shepherd was her close relationship with the Diocese. In 1988 she asked me to

represent our church on the committee to search for a bishop to replace Bishop Weinbauer who was planning to retire. Subsequently she nominated me for a position on the Executive Council of the Diocese and much to my surprise I was elected. Each year Charlotte chose a group from the church to go to Convention at Kanuga and accompanied us. She knew many people in the diocese and introduced us to her friends so that we always enjoyed the meetings. We have been grateful that she made it possible for us to know our church on the diocesan level.

A large group of people from Good Shepherd went to Bishop Johnson's consecration at the Civic Center in Asheville. Doris Etler remembers that they took our small church banner expecting to carry it and found that the banners of all the churches were being raised on tall poles. Fortunately Bob Etler scurried around and secured two idle mop handles that he was able to borrow for the occasion and raise our banner with the others.

The next year at Diocesan Convention in Kanuga we were amazed at the beautiful banners brought by many parishes to line the gymnasium walls. Dot Ament remembers that after returning that year the rector asked that a group at Good Shepherd make a new banner for the next convention. Our rector, Charlotte, chose "The Lamb of God Rampant" as our motif. In memory of Laura Wrisley, daughter of Josephine and John and mother of Stephen, a small group including Lou White, John Wrisley and Dot Ament volunteered to make the banner. John enlarged the picture of the Lamb, Dot cut the pieces of it from felt and Lou stitched them on the blue felt background. That is the church banner that often hangs at the front of the church and was carried many times to Convention.

During October 1989 the congregation explored the need for redevelopment, did a feasibility study and completed questionnaires. In the summer of 1990, the vestry selected an architect, James Padgett, AIA. After much discussion with representatives of the congregation, plans were drawn up and presented at the annual meeting in 1990. To be included on the lower level were four church school classrooms, a nursery, an assembly, activity room, present rest rooms, kitchen and storage. On the upper level there would be an enlarged nave and narthex, rector's office, secretary's office, library/conference/study room, new rest rooms, relocated stairway to classrooms, new parish hall and kitchen. The planning unfortunately neglected to provide

space for the choir and a vesting room.

Earle Seaverns remembers that “it was in one of our first vestry retreats which were held at In the Oaks in Black Mountain in December, 1989 that we, as a vestry, came up with our first Mission Statement.

Music had been important in our worship from the beginning and even before we started on the redevelopment of the church in the late eighties we took a giant step forward with our music program. Earl Seaverns remembers, “When we were introducing things into our music at the church service ‘my Sally’ stood in front of the congregation teaching them how to sing the psalm, which we still do.” Soon after Doris Etlar came in the early eighties, she joined the first formal five-member choir, “when sometimes there were only three choristers able to come to the service.” We appreciated her patience, as she, also, taught everyone to sing “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of Power and Might” in the service.

As we grew in our music ministry we sought advice. First we purchased an electronic organ to replace the old pump organ. Then the Rev. Charlotte asked Bill Stokes, organist and choirmaster at All Souls’ Church in Asheville and music consultant to the diocese, to come to Good Shepherd. He listened to the choir and told them they sang “like Episcopalians” and “could do better”. Then he gave a concert open to the public. It was attended by a full house and was beautiful!

Pat and Dave Werdin came to Hayesville in 1990. Dave had been an Episcopalian and an altar boy in his youth. Pat had taken part in a number of church choirs so they were happy to find Good Shepherd and the choir there. Anne Heilner was our organist. Patrick McLean was directing the choir temporarily while he was a member of our EFM group, hoping to become a Deacon. Sally Seaverns was the star soprano. For the Easter service in 1991 the choir of twelve vested members marched in and gave a memorable performance, ending the service triumphantly with hymn # 335 “I am the Bread of Life”.

For the next few years the choir languished as we struggled with the renovation. We had lost our star soprano and in grieving many of us became seriously interested in The Order of Saint Luke and the healing ministry.

In 1993 Joe and Evie Greene who had been active in the Church of the Messiah moved their membership to the Church of the Good Shepherd. They were living in Hiwassee on Raney Mountain and

Hayesville was much closer than Murphy. Both Joe and Evie were experienced Episcopalians who had been active in their churches always. They both joined the choir and Evie became a member of the altar guild. Since then her lifetime as a teacher has kept her involved in adult spiritual formation classes. When Edie Kliempeter directed dramatic presentations of the lives of the saints in the early nineties Evie Greene starred. In more recent years Evie became the mentor for a multi-level EFM group after she completed the course herself in 1998.

Joe had been senior warden in many churches over the years. He took on that responsibility again just as our rector Charlotte took a much-needed sabbatical leave of absence after we completed the renovation process. We were blessed to have an experienced senior warden and vestry as we used supply priests and lay ministers for the last half of 1993 and the first part of 1994.

Evie tells that in 1993 “the choir had five members, Mary Anne Koos, Bob Gaunt, Doris Etlar, Joe and me. Every Sunday we pleaded with the congregation to come join the choir. One night this cute little blonde showed up and asked if it was all right if she could sing with us. We nearly fell off our seats! Was it all right? Well, I guess! That was the first time any of us had met Bev Larson. Then she said she sang alto and she had a sister who sang soprano and a husband who sang tenor. We had more than doubled the choir. We are still thankful for them in so many ways.”

A capital fund drive was launched to finance the redevelopment with all the one hundred and three families listed in the parish directory participating, each pledging as much as they could afford in thanksgiving for God’s blessings. In addition some made donations toward specific rooms or portions of the new building. These gifts are designated with small plaques in appropriate places. Everyone was encouraged to contribute time and talent as well as money.

Doris Etlar tells a wonderful story about a funeral in 1992 at which she and Bob were present. Doris writes, “We were in the process of adding to the church. The ramp that led up from the parking lot to the narthex had been removed to make room for the addition of parish hall and administrative offices. There was a six-foot jump up to the front doors. People entered the church from the lower level up the narrow stairway that led to the nave. A huge plastic curtain protected the backs of the pews and cooled our backs on windy days.

A cousin of O.A. Blankenship, who had been our contractor in 1981, died in Asheville. The family was anxious to have his funeral at Good Shepherd and burial in Hayesville. They sent Kenny Blankenship who had been a member of our church as a young child, to negotiate with our rector, Charlotte. She agreed if they could manage to get in from the parking lot. The hearse drew up to the entrance of the church; pallbearers lifted the casket six feet into the air and wheeled it into the church. The funeral proceeded and at the recessional the deceased left in the same way.

During the renovation process the church office consisted of a small trailer in the lower parking lot where our secretary, Renee Williams perched on a high stool in front of a drafting table overseeing the entire procedure. Renee writes: "I began as secretary the week before Easter in 1991. I remember doing all the bulletins that week and I had never worked in a church office before. I almost decided against staying after that week, but told Charlotte I would give it a try for three months to give her time to find a secretary.

Well, those three months went by and still no secretary. So I just kept on working. I worked downstairs where the classrooms, Charlotte's office, the kitchen and parish hall were set up. We started the food pantry in that little kitchen. I soon moved outside in the lower parking lot in a construction trailer where I worked for about nine months while the church was expanded.

I moved into the beautiful new office just months before we dedicated our 'new church'. Soon after I told Charlotte I would like to stop working and she began to look for a secretary. That was probably in March 1993 and Mary Strange began working in April 1993. I did stay with her for a couple of weeks. I had not forgotten doing all those bulletins that week before Easter!"

Downstairs the church schoolrooms were finished entirely by the men of the church directed by foreman, Irish Mulcahy. Ably assisted by his wife, Helen, Irish contributed 660 hours to the project. A huge excavation on the upper side made way for a new stairwell leading to the addition upstairs that actually doubled the size of the church. These were exciting and stressful times. People dug deep in their pockets to provide whatever was needed. Gifts and furnishings enhanced the beauty and efficiency of every new room.

In September 1992, the addition was completed and dedicated by

retired Bishop Falwell. Turner Guidry writes, “I remember the three day celebration we had kicking off the addition to the church. Bishop Falwell came and was excited to be preaching a revival for the three days. He said he had never done an Episcopal Revival before. He had also never baptized anyone in a lake. We baptized Randy Horton at the beach in Hiawassee and had a wonderful picnic by the lake afterwards. At the final service on Sunday wrapping up the celebration Bishop Falwell did the Episcopal version of an altar call by inviting everyone forward to receive the laying on of hands and blessing of the bishop for reconciliation and renewal. The fear was that just a few would come up. As I remember, almost every pew was emptied as the people came forward.”

Georgia Bethel has another renovation story to relate. She writes, “When the church was undergoing the addition, the downstairs Sunday School area was crowded with boxes. Storage space was limited. Ann Bearse and I were the Sunday School teachers and we were getting ready for the Epiphany pageant. As everyone who has ever been involved with the pageant knows, there is not a whole lot of planning that can be done beforehand. Parents are reluctant to sign their children up and bring them for practices. So, on the day of the pageant, we had several changes and surprises. As we were fitting the children with their costumes, I suddenly realized that the kings’ crowns were missing. I had made these crowns several years previously and a lot of work had gone into them. (They are the same crowns that we use to this day.) Ann suggested that we make new ones quickly out of construction paper. I wasn’t keen on the idea, as I was the one who would have to make them. I decided that I needed a minute of silence away from the children. So I went into the ladies room and found myself praying about the crowns. I had already searched high and low, but to no avail. When I felt that I had prayed sufficiently I left the restroom and headed right into the nursery. I was drawn to the closet in the corner. I looked up and saw a paper bag that looked familiar. I pulled it down. There they were - the kings’ crowns. We were all thrilled. The children really wanted to wear these crowns so you can imagine how excited they were. The kings were adorned with their crowns. The pageant was wonderful. What an answer to prayer!”

Late in 1992 or the winter of 1993 another prayer for a group of women in the church was answered. Several people who had completed four years of EFM asked if we could form a group for

further spiritual growth. We met in our new library/study room. We began by reviewing Richard Foster's "Celebration of Discipline—the path to spiritual growth" and then moved to "Devotional Classics".

Barbara Hansen writes about the experience that lasted for several years. She says, "I had been exposed to a number of Bible Study/Christian Enrichment groups, but none had made that much impact until our Good Shepherd 'Spiritual Formation' sessions started. Sometimes six, sometimes ten of us ladies began meeting on Tuesday mornings. We used 'Devotional Classics' as a small guide book from which to start off, inspiring us through reflection and encouragement to satisfy our individual needs to recognize our souls. The book is a collection of classic Christian writings representing the five streams of Christian thought throughout the centuries. At the end of each selection are questions and exercises. None of us left that room on Tuesday morning until all the troubling empty spots and frustrations we had when we arrived at 10 AM had been cared for.

We met for several years, changing the name of our group with each new rector's advisement, and changing participants now and then. During those years several in the group moved closer to God in everlasting life, leaving us with sustaining love and tender influence to reward our spirits. God's grace sent us other beautiful sisters to bring their special insights. Our format and focus altered also. In our last years we studied and discussed the lectionary readings for each Sunday, but sincere love and caring for one another with the warm presence of our dear and faithful Lord remained a constant. This intimate group of ladies, individually and collectively, has left a precious mark on my life that will never be erased. I'm sorry we no longer meet together, but it is a lasting blessing for me to have been part of this 'Tuesday Morning Group' which finally met on Friday."

There are so many threads in the weaving of our ministries. Often there are Mary-Martha strands that draw different people at different times. So many women have been the "Marthas" of Altar Guild. In 1992 several of us had just put the ironing board up outside of the little altar guild room. In that awkward situation we were planning to iron the best linen altar cloth in preparation for the Resurrection Service that week. Quietly Pat Drew joined us with "good news". She had recently moved to Young Harris and would be in church every Sunday. She would like to help by doing all the linens every week. She would take them home after the Sunday Eucharist, launder and

iron them all and have them back in time for the next service. I think Pat has been doing that now for more than fourteen years.

Pat's counterpart was her husband, Bill, a wonderfully talented wood worker and craftsman. Bill came just at the right time. We needed furniture of all kinds for our addition. He and a friend salvaged beautiful lumber from the furniture plant in Andrews and outfitted the Rector's Office and that of the secretary with desks, bookcases and small tables.

This was just in time for at Easter 1993, we welcomed Mary Strange in her new role as our Administrative Assistant. Mary writes that, among many other happenings, she remembers: "The first Blessing of the Animals that I attended was with Charlotte. I believe it was the first one we had at Good Shepherd. Over the subsequent years the priests have blessed everything from pet snakes to goats to gerbils and, of course, cats, dogs and horses. Turner's traditional song, 'I Wanna Have Dog Breath' is one of the highlights of the service for everyone. Together we sing all the verses in fun and merriment. Our musical 'howl-l-l-l' usually elicits a few canine howls and everyone joins in a good laugh. The Blessing of the Animals wouldn't be the same now without 'Dog Breath.'"

It was in December of 1994 that Chosh and Bill Dacey moved to Tusquittee so that Bill could trout fish in his back yard. The church had recently become involved in Meals for Friends in Clay County. Edie Kleinpeter was coordinating drivers and routes for the program. Immediately upon meeting Chosh and Bill, Edie asked if they would take on that responsibility and they agreed. It was a great way to know the people of Clay County who lived in the country, often shut-ins in need of a hearty noon meal delivered to their homes. Chosh did the driving. Bill discovered that many of them needed small repairs or just a helping hand with a small household problem. He made a habit of taking his toolbox with him. They saved small chores for him. One elderly gentleman had trouble with the lock on his door and was delighted when Bill was able to fix it. People were pleased to see them coming and they were happy to be of help. This was the Daceys' beginning at the church.

Bill died in 1999 and Chosh has continued the Meals for Friends routine ever since, persuading many people to share in that ministry. In recent years she has added a potluck picnic at her house every spring

on Bill's Birthday, May 20th. It is an opportunity for drivers to get together to celebrate their work and a chance for recruits to consider whether the program is one they want to join. It is another opportunity for that feeling of belonging that comes with joining in an outreach group project.

Earl Seaverns remembers that he “first met my wife Jean through Meals on Wheels. She wanted to take her turn at delivering along with her husband, Hal, so I taught her the routes—and she has been doing this ever since. Because of being acquainted, in the course of time, we continued our friendship and eventually became husband and wife in 2001!”

It was probably in the mid 1990's that we also made the church available for the County Food Program. The kitchen downstairs became a storage area for surplus foods to be distributed to the eligible needy people in Clay County. Meg Gring took a leadership role in working with members from other churches and women of the community. It was an interdenominational project and within a few years grew beyond the space we could provide and into its own home on the road to Hinton Center. However, it has continued to be an outreach project for which we provide financial support and volunteers.

In November 1995, Charlotte Waldrop was called to a church in Columbia, South Carolina. As she readied herself to leave there was a tremendous celebration service to mark her ministry at Good Shepherd, and the many things accomplished in her years here.



**Church of the Good Shepherd – 1993**



**Good Shepherd Memorial Garden**



**Tuesday Morning Spiritual Formation Group**

Left to Right: Doris Etlar, Ginny Musselwhite, Barb Hansen, the Rev. Don O'Malley, Ella Angelillo, Anne Mitchell, Caroline Dunkle, and Ellie Wilson.

## Chapter 8 - More Recent Years (1995-2005)

In December 1995, the Reverend Robert Reuss became our interim priest. A search committee representing every faction of the congregation was appointed and met regularly. From a list of priests interested in coming to the mountains of western North Carolina we interviewed many candidates. The church was in debt for the wonderful building addition we had just completed. Our budget was tight. Some applicants were older priests who wanted to approach retirement in a less stressful environment than where they had spent recent years. They needed a salary that would facilitate their retirement years. We couldn't offer it. We had a wonderful time meeting good, inspiring, experienced clergy, but the search went on and on. Still God blessed us with a fine interim so we didn't feel hurried.

The Reverend Bob Reuss had retired, after thirty years in one church, from the Diocese of Rhode Island. He wanted to be near his wife who was the rector at the Church of the Messiah. Bob was a wonderful supportive pastor, a good priest in every way. We were more than happy with our interim, but he could not become our rector, and he was difficult to replace.

Pat Jordan remembers an occasion and writes, "After I had been on altar guild for some time Bishop Johnson was coming for confirmation and we were preparing the altar between services. There were probably four or five of us so we each thought the other knew what they were doing. I did not check to make sure everything was done correctly. When it came time for the Consecration the Bishop looked down and said, 'There is no Host, what should we do?' Bob Reuss picked up a wafer and said, 'Use this.' How embarrassing! Father Reuss was so nice about it and so was the Bishop. Thank God for Jesus! If we had been living back in Old Testament days we would have been struck dead for such a mistake."

Several people reminded me of a trip we enjoyed while we were somewhat in transition. A group of ladies decided that we needed a retreat. Most had not gone to Valle Crucis in the late eighties when we went with Charlotte and Herb, and had not seen the fresco churches. We planned our expedition, made reservations at the Valle Crucis Retreat Center and chose drivers. We managed to agree on a route and started out past Asheville and up Route 23 toward Mars Hill.

We stopped fairly often for breaks and gas. Each of us had a different idea about the best way to go because roads through the mountains twist and turn, but we were all in a holiday spirit and followed whichever way seemed best, laughing all the way. It took us ten hours to reach Valle Crucis. En route we visited both the fresco churches and drove through Boone to see Appalachia State University. At last we arrived in Valle Crucis and registered at the Mission House. We stayed in the Annex down near the Apple Barn and had it all to ourselves. We hiked a good bit, explored the area, visited the village, Mast Store and the church, rocked on the front porch and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

We read with interest the history of the mission. In the early part of the nineteenth century Bishop Ives was the Bishop of all North Carolina, including the "Missionary District of Western North Carolina". An Episcopal traveler in the mountains just south of the Virginia border discovered the valley where the creek forms the sign of a cross. He felt the significance of the area and named it the Veil of the Cross or Valle Crucis. He reported this to Bishop Ives who sent the Reverend Henry Pruit to found a mission and build a church in 1842. I think the glimpse of early Episcopal history in the northern mountains of western North Carolina and the experience of seeing the church frescoes gave us new perspective. With fresh energy we returned from that vacation to search in earnest for a rector.

God has been good to us always. One day Ginny Musslewhite, our search chairperson, who had worked patiently through all the interviews, telephone calls, consultations with the Bishop and personalities of the committee, received a telephone call. The Reverend Donald O'Malley from New Jersey was interviewing in Charlotte, North Carolina, looking for his first church. Hayesville looked close enough to Charlotte for him to come the next day. He wanted to interview while he was in the area. Would we see him? It was somewhat irregular since he had not yet met our Bishop Johnson. However, Bishop Johnson agreed and Debbie and Don O'Malley arrived for an interview. Don was retired from the Coast Guard and had graduated from Virginia Seminary. While he was in school, Debbie had been working in their church in Maryland. Their three children were in college. The O'Malleys were ready to come to the mountains, and we were ready for a dedicated couple. Everyone was excited as we reached consensus. We left the meeting joyful over success, at last.

Rosemary Sells has a memory of an afternoon soon after, "At our weekly bridge Ginny Musselwhite was happy to announce that the Church of the Good Shepherd had called a new, young, wonderful, to-be-ordained priest to start his ministry on July 1, 1997. I was pleased, as I knew they had had an interim priest for over a year. During that time Greg and I were driving 75 miles round trip to worship at St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Andrews for their only service at 11am. We had visited Good Shepherd on several occasions, but just did not feel at home.

Greg died suddenly on September 4, 1997. I phoned Ginny to ask if she thought this new rector would be willing to do a memorial service for a man he never knew and for someone he had not met. The next Sunday I joined Ginny and Otie at the 10:30 service at Good Shepherd. I spoke to Don O'Malley who agreed to come to my home and talk. The date was set later for the memorial service as our family was scattered about the country. Some of our favorite Lutheran hymns were used and a simple service closed that part of my life.

A reception followed that Saturday morning service, 'catered' by my bridge friends. Many were delighted to meet some of our Tusquittee neighbors who were of vintage generations and didn't know what Episcopal meant, although one or two of them had been involved in the construction of the 1981 church.

I needed a church home following Greg's death, and have been welcomed into the family of Good Shepherd since. Bishop Johnson received me on his next trip to Hayesville in 1998. Ginny and Otie sponsored me for Cursillo #49 in Black Mountain They are gone now but were wonderful friends to me. We are blessed to continue to have a loving, worshipping community at Good Shepherd."

Deacon Donald O'Malley accepted the call to come to the Church of the Good Shepherd in June 1997. He was ordained to the priesthood in December and became our Rector. The Reverend Don is a Biblical student and a patient teacher. He led us through several books of the Bible. He had Morning Prayer at nine o'clock every weekday morning for himself and any that chose to join him. He is a good administrator and chose a strong Vestry. Blessings come in many ways, sometimes at the time we are not fully aware of their nature, but welcome them nonetheless. In the last half of nineties we had a Vestry with knowledge and experience financially.

Gradually we became debt free and able to move ahead.

Don facilitated the establishment of the Memorial Garden almost as soon as he arrived. He helped select the location, the benches, and design the path that encircles the center. Memorials given in memory of Monroe Wilson, who died in 1996, greatly enriched the garden, and his family added the beautiful black walnut board in the narthex to commemorate those who are buried there.

In 1995 Bill and Deanna DuBose moved to Shooting Creek from Atlanta where they were active and devoted Lutherans. They have a beautiful garden area by the small creek down a gentle slope from their house where they often entertain the church *Cursillo Ultreya*. Deanna became active in the Flower Guild. Recognizing their gifts and kindness I asked them to help me with the Memorial Garden. Together they took over the care of the Garden, planting, watering, and weeding. To date there are over forty members of Good Shepherd buried there.

Judy Taylor told me that in November 1997, she and Clyde came to church on the Sunday after Thanksgiving. I think it was one of those “low Sundays” when attendance was not quite usual. There were visiting families present and many other regulars missing. After church Judy and Clyde went into the parish hall for coffee. They stood around for a while and commented quietly to each other, “Yes, this is certainly a typical Episcopal church, how unfriendly!”

Before the words died in the air, Hugh Mitchell approached them and began to talk. Of course Anne joined him and then Ed and Gini Reynolds. Soon they found themselves invited to Anne and Hugh’s for brunch, and as they were leaving Gini and Ed graciously invited them to their home for dinner. These two couples literally prayed the Taylors into the community. In thanksgiving for that Thanksgiving experience Judy writes: “We are grateful. The love of the Good Shepherd Church moves through many channels and coffee hour is just one of them.”

To maintain our sense of community as we grew in numbers Don organized “Home Churches” in different communities. Each group chose their own style and pattern. Our group met on one Sunday afternoon each month in rotation for a potluck at homes. We had a nice variety of ages and welcomed the children who added life to the event and were always good sports. Other groups had progressive dinners and some chose to meet at a restaurant once a month. It was a good way to maintain small close groups within the larger church

community. Soon our Rector also added the Women's Appreciation Dinner. It was an elegant affair sometime during the late winter, entirely planned, arranged, cooked, and served by the men of the parish, complete with after-dinner entertainment.

The congregation was expanding in number and diversity. The choir grew and became more formalized with gowns and different collars for different occasions. In response to need and urgent prayer, Bev Larsen, who is a fine musician, quietly took on the leadership of the choir. Anne Menasian honed her talent on our wonderful organ and, in 2002, Carol Smucker became accompanist on the piano. In 2003 Jerry Taylor replaced Anne as our organist.

To our surprise Jerry has a long history with our church. He lives in Hiawassee, teaches in the high school and is the recognized historian of Towns County. In the 1970's while he was a student at Young Harris College he met our priest, Jack Watson. One Valentine's Day the wedding of Phyllis Roberts, eldest daughter of Bud and Frances Roberts, was scheduled at the Church of the Messiah. Frances was the organist at Messiah at that time but as the mother of the bride she needed an organist to take her place. Jerry agreed to play for the wedding. The day dawned with a heavy snowstorm and impassable roads. Most of us waded through drifts to get to the church. A jeep was dispensed to go for Jerry and the wedding celebration was saved. More recently Jerry Taylor was the organist who played for Quentin Moore's funeral in 1981. At that time Ruth Moore was our organist and again Jerry helped out in a time of need.

It is wonderful to live in a small community where paths cross and re-cross. It is a pleasure to have an organist with a Good Shepherd history and a kind heart. It is a joy to sing with this leadership of Bev, Jerry, Carol and a wonderful choir. Whether one is in the congregation, slightly off key, or a gifted member of the choir who practices faithfully; music enhances our worship regularly. We also have several soloists who perform on occasion. With difficulty we try to refrain from applause, inappropriate in the midst of the service, but our hearts are filled to overflowing with thanks.

The church stays busy. Volunteers tend plots of garden in front and around the church. Periodically we meet to clean windows and refurbish the nave. Paul Jordan became the sexton for several years and then joined Pat in changing the fall bazaar into the Country Fare.

With expanded space in the parish hall craftspeople are invited to set up booths. This project grew to fill the parking lots. The attendance mushroomed to the point that the men in the Rescue Squad could no longer manage the traffic on the highway and we set up a shuttle system from the parking lot at Ingles. We added a silent auction. The proceeds continue to be allocated to the local service organizations and they are invited to publicize by setting up information tents on “Fare Day.”

In 1998, we were further blessed with the ordination of the Deacon Reverend Turner Guidry at All Souls Cathedral in Asheville. Officially, Turner is the Youth Minister, but as he is a man for all seasons he is able to assist in many ways with sermons, pastoral care and good humor. Out of kindness, as I was finishing this story, Turner shared his tale of the Mudpuppies, just “in case it might be appropriate to our story”. He writes, “Our Mudpuppies ministry began in 2003 with just a handful of boys, primarily our Good Shepherd youth, desiring to study the Bible. We stayed after school one day a week, walked into our small town to get ice cream and then read the Bible together. We fairly quickly outgrew our limited space and asked one of our local downtown churches for the use of a Sunday school classroom. Again we outgrew that space and began to meet in the Methodist Church’s fellowship hall. About 25 boys meet once a week with me. The church has offered support for this Mudpuppies outreach ministry, which includes boys from every denomination, socio-economic status, churched and unchurched. Our own youth, Alex Walters, Nathan Bourne, Trevor Van, James Schrieber, J. G. Moss and Morgan Moss have taken a strong leadership role among the other boys and are primarily responsible for this spread of the Kingdom of God out into the world.”

Turner has also been an advisor for our growing group of Lay Eucharistic Ministers. Anne Mitchell reports, “One cold winter morning when I was a relatively new chalice, I had on a wool suit jacket that wouldn’t fit under my vestments. In the ladies room I shed the jacket and gave some thought to removing my skirt as well, since I knew it would be hot in the church. However, the ladies room became busy and I changed my mind. About three-fourths way through the communion service I needed some more wine in my chalice and went behind the altar to replenish it. I felt a strange sensation, looked down and found my skirt around my ankles. With a fervent prayer of

thanksgiving that it hadn't fallen while I was out at the altar rail, I kicked it under the altar and finished my duties. After communion I knelt at the altar rail for final prayers. When the absurdity of the situation settled in I realized I was about to laugh. I knew that Turner Guidry was directly opposite me on the other side of the altar. When Turner laughs he laughs with his whole being. I knew if he had seen what had happened, I could not look at him. I kept my head devoutly bowed during prayers and processed out without incident. When everyone was out of the nave, I returned to retrieve my fallen skirt, and came back to the narthex to find Turner laughing his head off. He still laughs at the memory.”

Soon after Don became our Rector, Amy and Gil Nicolson migrated from Atlanta. Gil is an engineer and Amy is an expert in many areas. Gil came to supervise the Hiwassee River Watershed but he stayed to build the Housing Ministry along with a group of talented followers.

Mary Stewart and Fred King followed Gil and Amy from Atlanta, and arrived in Hayesville in 1999. Mary Stewart has this story to tell about her introduction to Good Shepherd.

“Fred and I had just moved to Hayesville in February, 1999. We had attended Good Shepherd several times. Having been raised in the Methodist Church we had every intention of visiting the one in Hayesville before we made up our minds. One Sunday as I stood in the Good Shepherd narthex, a lady purposefully strode over to me, introduced herself as Ginny Musslewhite, and told me I would be a great Parish Life Coordinator. I remember mumbling something to the effect that I had no idea what that was, that I was new to the church, etc. About that time Joan Foreman who was also new to the congregation, happened by. Ginny hooked her by the arm and said, ‘Well, this lady will help you, and anyway it’s a great way to meet people.’ Joan and I looked at each other as we watched Ginny sail on into the parish hall, satisfied that the position was filled. You just didn’t say no to Ginny!”

With the completion of her years as Parish Life Coordinator Mary Stewart joined husband, Fred King, Gil and Amy Nicolson and a host of others in building houses for needy families in the Clay County Housing Ministry.

Another member of the Housing Ministry, Bill DuBose,

contributes the story he wrote for the Highland Episcopalian, our Diocesan newspaper in 1999.

“Christianity doesn’t have a retirement plan! That’s the philosophy of Bob Gaunt who celebrated his 90th birthday on October 24th, 1999. He is a member of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Hayesville, and is one of our most active members.

Gaunt sings in the choir, he and his wife collate the monthly newsletter, and he does most of the big and little maintenance jobs around the church. In addition he heads the housing ministry for the men’s association and helps build houses for the needy.

While a lot of people take the attitude ‘We have done it all, now it’s time for the younger ones to take over.’ Gaunt continues to work for the Lord.

To watch him climb a ladder with a bucket of asphalt patching material in one hand and a brush in the other makes a lot of 75-year-olds envious. Yes, he does this sort of thing frequently when he helps repair the houses for the poor - part of the housing ministry job.

Although he grows his own vegetables and is an avid ham radio operator and a computer buff, he still finds time to help the local house raising volunteers build houses for poor families with children. No, Christianity does not have a retirement plan for 90-year old Bob Gaunt.”

In 1999, Ben and Claudia Kennedy moved from Carrolton, Georgia to Hiwassee and joined our church. Ben added his voice to the choir and Claudia brought enthusiasm, compassion and humor to many occasions. Ben shares his story of the trip to Jamaica when a number of people joined Amy and Gil Nicolson in their work with Habitat for Humanity there.

“Reminiscence: Outreach Trip to Jamaica”

Although I had been an Episcopalian for thirty years or more, coming to Good Shepherd after we retired and moved to mountains in 1999 really showed us parish outreach in ways we had never seen before. Claudia and I bought our place in ‘96, came here after careers of teaching. At Good Shepherd we met Gil and Amy Nicolson, Fred and Mary Stewart King, and lots of people like them in our new parish – beautiful people both inside and out. We discovered that Gil had worked for a number of years as building supervisor for

Atlanta Habitat for Humanity and that Fred had often volunteered with that outfit, skilled workman that he is. In Clay and Cherokee counties both couples were working with House-Raising Volunteers, strongly supported by Good Shepherd and its members. They were confirming the Habitat tradition in another for and setting.

In Carrolton I had been on the board of West Georgia Habitat for several years, mostly working as volunteer coordinator for skilled and unskilled people who helped build several houses in the area. One year we built four dwellings. Another year the bishop and clergy of the Diocese of Atlanta completed one of the houses in a week as part of a spiritual and work retreat. So the Kennedys, Nicolsons and Kings kind of jelled around the idea of decent, affordable housing for our partners among God's poor – the Habitat ideal. And we found it great that our parish, Good Shepherd, supported that aim and did much in other areas of outreach, too.

In 2001 Gil and Amy left for a three-year stint with HFH International in Jamaica, working out of Port Maria in the northeast corner of the island. Bob Gaunt, intrepid worker that he is, had already gone down for a two-week working trip (and stoutly stood up to a would-be robber while there). We decided to go down to work as well, hoping, though to avoid trouble. Four of us went in January 2002—Fred and I, Ken and Judy Campbell who had volunteered with Habitat in Romania. The Nicolsons met us in Montego Bay airport, and then we rocketed across the north end of the island on the shore road in a van taxi, driving on the left, dodging wandering goats and treacherous potholes.

Our first day's work was for the Johnsons who were building their house on family land. The block foundation was already in place, but we backfilled it with rock and sand, 'grit' in Jamaican parlance. Everything was moved by the bucketful – no backhoe here. The next day we poured concrete. As the sputtering Honda mixer poured forth its mixture, we helped an army of Jamaican volunteers from the Heart Trust that Amy had recruited, dump bucket after bucket of concrete for the slab. Some stronger youths could roll up wheelbarrows of the gray slimy mix. Others smoothed as we poured. By quitting time the floor for the eventual 800 square foot house was finished.

Our next site was 'hup' and 'ill' on Days Mountain where Popeye

and Gloria Norman were going to live in their new two-bedroom with their four kids still at home. Popeye got his name from working aboard ships half a year to support his family. He also repaired automobiles. Gloria also had various jobs; like all the Jamaicans we met these folks were incredibly industrious and resourceful.

The walls were already standing on their house; we built forms for the lintels and posts for the veranda. Ken, Gil and Fred were the skilled ones here. I was the hunt and fetch guy. As Gil succinctly put it, 'Ben, I'll always be happy for you to hold the Alabama end of the tape.' My response, 'I said I was willing, not necessarily good.' By the end of the week we did another concrete pour on the posts and porch. The forms held just fine and the concrete began to harden.

It was almost dark when we got back to Gil and Amy's lovely house on a hill, overlooking the bay at Port Maria. We could hear the neighbor's roosters crowing in their flock, the sea crashing on the rocks, and reggae music starting up in the little club by the road. Tired, but happy, we ended the day with Evening Prayer. 'Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised.'

The next day we did just that, leaving our dear friends and fellow Good Shepherd parishioners behind. They stayed for almost two years before coming back to us. But we knew from that trip we had done a bit to advance the long tradition of reaching out to help others that our mountain church is known for."

Another ministry of recent years takes place close to home, but reaches far and wide. Elizabeth and Joe Rybicki retired to Hayesville in the late nineties. Elizabeth's bookstore quickly became a gathering place on the Square in Hayesville. As Prayer Shawl Ministry Coordinator, Elizabeth contributes this story.

#### "Knitting into the Mystery of God – The Prayer Shawl Ministry

Most people think the ministry just sprang into life overnight. However, actually this was a two-year journey for me listening to God and trying to understand the message. Then suddenly it all fell into place. Maybe that journey really began much earlier. I learned to knit as a child sitting alongside my mother, Elizabeth Huston. I hadn't knitted in years and quite frankly the process didn't come easily to me. But I loved the product so much that every so often I'd give it a try again. The latest urge hit in 2002. For some reason I wanted to knit shawls.

A big project for someone who “worked at it” but this time it came easily to me. Suddenly I could understand knitting patterns. I knitted shawls for family, friends and myself for about a year before I began to feel I should knit shawls for a couple of our church members who weren’t doing well. I felt a little self-conscious about the idea since they weren’t close friends. I wondered if this urge was one to follow or not.

Then one day in the fall of 2003 a man came into my shop and we got to talking about the Order of St. Luke. He told me their OSL chapter had added prayer shawls to their ministry and amazing things were happening to the ones that received them. People were reporting healing more quickly than normal, receiving great comfort from wearing them and knitters were truly enjoying the knitting. A few days later I was researching books of new shawl patterns and an unusual title came up in the lists, ‘Knitting into the Mystery’. When I opened up the title for more details, it said ‘Guide to the Prayer Shawl Ministry’.

I had never heard of the ministry until the week before and here was the guide. I ordered one and read it three times in the first week. With the gift of love that Good Shepherd has, I could see this ministry becoming a real part of our church family. I talked to Father John Rice and Deacon Turner Guidry, and they encouraged me to pray into this and see where I was led. The more I prayed and contemplated, I knew this was what I needed to do. I started my first prayer shawl in February of 2004 for one of those people I’d felt an urge to knit for and it just felt so right as I knitted it. Then I loaned the book to Deanna Dubose and she said, ‘I’m doing this too.’ In late March Father John came down to the shop to talk some more with me about this ministry and found both of us knitting away. He gave his blessing to start this as a church wide ministry, and I scrambled to get a notice in the April newsletter asking if there were others interested.

Within a week twelve ladies, including my mother, had called to get directions, and we’ve never looked back. In the first year we had 30 knitters, including one man, Harry Baughn do at least one shawl. We logged in over 110 shawls in our first year. Amazing and touching thank you letters have been received by all of us. The shawls definitely bless both the maker and the wearer. We knit anywhere and everywhere, most of us carry a shawl to knit on as we wait for appointments. The group meets on the second Mondays in the Parish Hall from 10 to 12 to knit together and to teach beginners how to knit.

That was how the ministry was started in our church. Worldwide, it started in the seminary in Hartford, Connecticut. They started out knitting shawls for those who were ill or needed uplifting. The ministry has spread, shawl by shawl, all over the United States and has begun in Europe. I talked with St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Ullapool, Scotland when Joe and I were there on vacation in September, 2004 and they have now begun knitting prayer shawls, too. It is a real joy for me to share this ministry with others and to hear news of other groups that our work has helped to found.

We've all read about prayer shawls in the Bible and many cultures have special shawls they wear when they pray. What makes these different is we pray for the person who will receive the shawl as we knit. Thus the very fibers of the shawl have prayers entwined in them. The shawls may be rectangles or triangles and are usually knit in knit 3, purl 3 patterns to represent the Holy Trinity. They are made with soft and cuddly yarns in colors especially chosen for the recipient. When they are finished, they are blessed on the altar by Father John or Deacon Turner, and given away.

Usually we know whom we are knitting for, but not always. That doesn't matter since God knows who it will be for even before we start. Usually we knit shawls for healing, but we also knit shawls for celebrations, special occasions and for christenings. The shawls are never sold. They are gifts of love and time. Donations for more supplies are gratefully accepted, but never required in order to receive or request a shawl.

The prayer shawl ministry headquarters is in my bookshop, Phillips and Lloyd on the Town Square in Hayesville. We keep all the instructions, logs, books and donated yarn there so it is readily available during the week. Knitters are welcome to drop in anytime with problems or questions or just to sit and knit a while. When Joe and I opened the shop in June of 1999, we wanted it to be a gathering place for the community and over the years a lot of ministry has been done from the shop. Putting the shawl ministry supplies there was a natural extension of the community outreach that was already a part of the shop.

May all your threads be blessed!"

During the five years that the Reverend Don O'Malley was our priest, we became deeply involved in a Healing Ministry. Don was a

man of deep faith who shared his prayers with us and encouraged the congregation to pray with each other. We prayed regularly for healing for all that were listed on our prayer list. Don shared his concern for his brother and his son Patrick, who were seriously ill. We joined him in those prayers and at the altar rail following the 10:30 service each Sunday, just as we had in previous years. Together he and Deacon Turner formed a Chapter of The Order of Saint Luke and called on the Reverend John Rice and others to hold summer training sessions at Good Shepherd. This was a wonderful preparation for the future of our healing ministry.

It was in 2003 that the Reverend Don left us. At the suggestion of the Bishop, the Reverend John Rice, Director of Centurion House in Asheville, immediately assumed responsibility for the Church of the Good Shepherd. In 2004 he became our Rector, and as this story is being written he and all our church family are making new history.

One member contributed the following observation on March 8, 2005:

“There are angels in our midst. Five of them came to my house last Thursday to help dust and clean after Gil sanded the floor. There was dust everywhere and some of it had years of dirt with it. I am blessed.”

Helen Naismith has a story of evangelism with which I will conclude this chapter: It is titled “Surely the Presence of the Lord is in this Place” (@ Lanny Wolfe Music 1977)

Helen writes: “In April 2002 I invited my house guest, Evelyn Theriault of Beverly, Massachusetts, to the Women’s Appreciation Dinner. Its theme that year was an Evening in Paris, featuring French cuisine by our resident gourmet chef, Nick George.

As we drove into the parking lot I said, ‘I know you’ll enjoy this evening, Ev. Perhaps you’d like to attend church with me tomorrow.’

Although a lifetime Roman Catholic, Evelyn had not attended church for eleven years. ‘I think I’ll pass,’ she replied, ‘I haven’t been to church in a long time.’

But God had other plans for my visitor from New England.

At dinner, she was immediately drawn into Good Shepherd’s family of warm, spirit-filled Christians. She chatted pleasantly with Deanna DuBose and Marcia Patterson as she enjoyed Nick’s tasty French dishes served with good humor by Dave Larsen and

Bob Gaunt. These people have something special in their lives, she realized as the evening wore on, and that ‘something special’ had been missing in her own life for many years.

Next morning I was surprised to find my guest up and dressed early. ‘I’ve decided to go to church with you,’ she said brightly. ‘I liked the people I met last night; they were very nice and I would like to see them again at church.’

Evelyn attended the 10:30 service that morning, receiving Holy Communion for the first time in more than thirty years. It changed her life completely. When she returned home, she joined the Episcopal Church in the nearby village of Hamilton, founded by the family of American hero, General George S. Patton. Among those she added to the parish prayer list was the Reverend O’Malley’s son, Patrick, who was seriously ill with a brain infection.

Today Evelyn is very active in her church. Not only does she attend services every Sunday, she is also involved in the Thrift Shop and works one day a week in the church office.”



**Thursday Post-Communion Lunch Group with the Rev. John Rice**



**The three wise kings with the almost lost crowns**



**Pat Jordan with School Supplies for Outreach Project**



**Easter Cross background for individual and family photos  
(done by Meg Gring Whitley each year for the past 14 years)**

## EPILOGUE

Good Shepherd has been an important part of my life and the life of my family for more than fifty years. We have celebrated four baptisms, five confirmations, two weddings, and one memorial service. It has been a pleasure for me to recall these years and many of the people who have made the church what it is.

The Holy Spirit has guided four bishops and eleven priests who have affected the lives of this congregation through the years. The church family comes from different parts of the country, various spiritual backgrounds and denominations, assorted backgrounds and experiences. We have grown close to each other in our community of faith. Since 1952, when we first started meeting together, we have been blessed with a steady growth in means, membership, and a sense of mission. Worship, fellowship, study, hospitality and outreach have been goals of this family in Christ.

Since our first celebration to welcome community visitors to the annual bazaar in 1960, the parish has regularly scheduled concerts, programs, special services, dinners, receptions, workshops and other events as opportunities to share fellowship with others in our communities. Over the years the people of the church have raised thousands of dollars to give to agencies near and far. We have just begun to do the work we are called to do.

I am thankful for many aspects of our character as a church: We are a congregation with a sense of humor, and fun, a working congregation as well as a worshipping one, a forgiving congregation: We welcome differences and learn from them. We're a faithful family, willing to take chances and accept change. We believe that the miracles recounted in Sunday School episodes are small in comparison with the miracles that come in our lives as we listen for God's will and follow Him.

I am thankful for all the people who took time to write their stories and their memories and to contribute their insight; for those who shared their memories for me to tell. I have remembered many people who have been active in the church. I hope my stories are acceptable to each of them. For those who preferred to remain anonymous I am also grateful. There will be ample opportunity to

discuss the story and recall many people and incidents that I have not included.

I am thankful also for Mary Strange who has organized and selected snapshots and pictures, some of which we have been able to include. Without Mary's support this whole story would not have been in the shape it is in.

I am thankful for all the people who helped to get this story printed: Ben Kennedy who edited, Anne Mitchell and Anne Wolf who formatted, Kathryn Hoyt, my daughter Florence Atwood, Rachel Baughn and Andy Dickert who facilitated the transfer to the printer.

## APPENDIX

From the Book of Common Prayer, Fourth Sunday of Easter:

“O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”

### 1989 Mission Statement

“The mission of the Church of the Good Shepherd is to be a worshipping community of faith through which the presence of God is explored in the lives of its members, and to extend the ministry of Jesus Christ, not only among the membership, but also to Good Shepherd’s neighbors in the mountains and in the world, by offering worship, Christian education, spiritual guidance, outreach ministries, pastoral care, healing and fellowship.”

### 2005 Mission Statement:

“Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the people of Good Shepherd are called to joyfully reveal God’s love and Christ’s healing light to all.”

### Our greeting

“To all who are weary and need rest; to all who are lonely and want fellowship; to all who mourn and wish comfort; to all who pray and to all who do not, but ought; to all who sin and need a Savior; and to whosoever will ---- this church opens wide the door, and says in the name of the Compassionate Christ, “Welcome.”

## **Bishops of the Church of the Good Shepherd**

The Right Reverend Matthew George Henry  
Bishop of the Diocese of Western North Carolina 1948-1975

The Right Reverend William Gillette Weinbauer  
Bishop of Western North Carolina 1975-1990

The Right Reverend Robert Hodges Johnson  
Bishop of Western North Carolina 1990-2004

The Right Reverend Granville Porter Taylor  
Bishop of Western North Carolina 2004

## **Clergy of the Church 1952 – 2005**

- The Reverend Rhett Winters 1952–1954
- The Reverend William Russell 1954–1956
- The Reverend Alex Hanson 1957–1962
- The Reverend Hamilton Witter 1962–1965
- The Reverend Jack Watson 1967–1975
- The Reverend Brad Rockwood 1976–1986
- The Reverend Charlotte Waldrop 1986–1995
- The Reverend Robert Reuss 1996–1997
- The Reverend Donald O'Malley 1997–2003
- The Reverend John Rice 2004–

