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The Episcopal Church in Burlington, 1879-1979

One Hundred Years in History



Margaret Elizabeth Gant

For the library of Elon College

Elizabeth Hart

5/14/79

The Episcopal Church
in Burlington, 1879-1979

One Hundred Years of History

by Margaret Elizabeth Gant

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In loving memory of

Corinna Morehead Erwin Gant

*this history is presented
to the Episcopal church in Burlington
by the Gant family.*



Lawrence S. Holt.

Reflections

Trolley car rides out to a field and an all day picnic for Sunday school... Dick Anderson carving turkeys for the annual parish dinner in the fall... The women's annual picnic at the Roger Gant's packbarn... The Cherub Choir singing "Away In a Manger" with their hands pressed together like little angels... The Carol Choir making Brunswick Stew at the Denney's for a fund raiser... EYC trips to ice skate in Greensboro... an EYC convention and final dance in the Great Hall... Mrs. J. Dolph Long teaching the Women's Bible Class... Young George Long taking over the Men's Bible Class when he was fresh out of Law School but the class was composed of venerable leaders of Burlington... Miss Nora Hughes walking faithfully to church each day for years to keep the books and the endless records; she began her career at Holy Comforter after her retirement... Valeria Scott "substituting" the Women's Bible Class, which the men later joined, for 20 years... "B" Holt, Dodi James, Rose Anne Gant and Ethel Gant all teaching Sunday School and trying not to teach their own children... The Carol Choir giggling at Bishop Baker's singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" off key... Happenings at 11:00 church... Getting that new blue carpet down in time for Holt Brown's wedding... Lawrence Morrow humming down the hall on his way to do something no one else knows how to do... Soldiers spending Saturday nights on cots in the Parish House during World War II... Jeannette Hassell directing the choirs and playing the organ... Hobart

Steele tolling the church bell... Lois Tekely and Rod Reinecke chatting through the new doorway to the rector's office... Barry Kramer signing a service at St. Anthanasius... Candlelight and carols in a crowded church for the midnight service Christmas Eve... Pancake Suppers whipped up by the EYC on Fat Tuesday... Covered dish suppers before Wednesday night Lenten studies... Days and days in Confirmation classes... Passing the Peace in church... That awful Green Book... and more of the Green Book... and finally there was the new red Prayer Book... Visits from the Bishops... Children invited to the altar rail while their parents take Communion... Vestry meetings... hard decisions, hours of planning and working and more working... Episcopal Churchwomen recording books for the visually impaired... Easter egg hunts for preschoolers in the church yard... Faded cellophane covered eggs found in mid July... Dr. G. Eugene Holt being the next door neighbor to seven different rectors... Thirty-five men coming for breakfast on Sunday mornings... St. Margaret's Guild meetings since 1924... Althae Riddle and Dodi James each designing and making altar cloths... Episcopal Churchwomen serving other groups luncheons in the Great Hall... All day bazaars and all year work to prepare for them... Seventeen rectors, two assistants, and three ministers to the deaf in one hundred years... aspirations for the ones to come.. these are all part of the Episcopal Church in Burlington....

The town of Company Shops originated in 1856 when the North Carolina Railroad Company selected the site in Alamance County to house its repair and maintenance shops. The practically unpopulated location was approximately at the middle of the Goldsboro to Charlotte line. Around the railroad facilities a town developed.¹ The first building constructed was a lodging house, the second was the railroad commissary — a two-story brick structure housing a general store, the railroad station and the post office. The second was used by the Masonic Hall and served as a meeting place for the young community and as a house of worship. Later, a foundry and several shops were built near the railroad. Offices for the company were constructed and the following year a hotel was built.² The industry drew people and commerce and a town grew up around the railroad center; it was named after its first purpose, Company Shops.

It was probably in the second building, the two-story multi-purpose structure that the first recorded Episcopal services were held in Alamance County. The Reverend John R. Joyner was serving at St. Barnabas in Greensboro when he mentioned in his annual report to the diocese in 1870 that he had begun holding monthly meetings at Company Shops. He also wrote “The prospect at this place is encouraging. Communicants-3.”³

In 1874 the North Carolina Railroad Company built Union Church in the center of town on a piece of land adjacent to the railroad on the present Fisher Street. This was the first building in the town to be constructed for holding worship services. Ministers from different denominations came on a rotating basis and the large two-story frame structure was also used part of the time as a school.⁴

In the annual reports to the diocese in 1877, Mr. Bynum wrote that he had just begun missionary work at Company Shops. He seemed to think that a lot of good might be accomplished if the mission could be sustained and that “Several most earnest church women live in the neighborhood, coming 6 or 7 miles to attend the services.”⁵

At that time the Reverend Mr. Bynum was still a Deacon and he performed the services in Company Shops until 1879 when he and Robert B. Sutton, D.D. of Raleigh were both listed as missionaries for Company Shops.

The Episcopalians who attended services at Union Church organized themselves in 1879. In March of that year they began to keep records of all the baptisms, marriages, confirmations and burial services. The members who began planning for the construction of a church for the denomination in Company Shops were Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence S. Holt, Mrs. William E. Holt, Mrs. James A. Graham, Mrs. Kirkman, Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Gant, Mrs. James Murphy, and William Allen Erwin. Although these eight individuals are credited with building the church, it should be noted that the parish registry also shows William Holt, James Murphy, Dr. and Mrs. John S. Murphy, Mrs. Amanda Henry and Mrs. Kirkman's daughter and son-in-law Mr. and Mrs. M. Morgan Shoffner to have been members in 1879.

From the very beginning, Will Erwin was a strong leader and a moving force in the Episcopal church in Company Shops. He was only twenty-three years old when he paid the North Carolina Railroad Company \$10 for lots 78, 82, 98 and 99 in Company Shops as a site for an Episcopal Church. These lots were bounded by Webb Avenue and Morehead Street and comprised one and a quarter acres. Interestingly enough, the deed recording the transfer of the property was not drawn up until after the building was under construction. In March 1880, Thomas M. Holt, President of the railroad company, signed the deed conveying this land to R.H. Battle and William R. Cox of Raleigh and the Right Reverend Thomas Atkinson of Wilmington and their successors in office for the purpose of locating an Episcopal church in the "village of Company Shops."⁶

Two of Mr. Erwin's older sisters were also members of the Episcopal mission in Company Shops. Corinna Erwin Gant had married John Q. Gant in April of 1879 and the newlyweds joined the church the same month. The second

sister was Margaret Erwin Holt, Corinna's senior, and the wife of Lawrence S. Holt. When the plans for the building were underway, Mr. Holt pledged \$500 toward the structure with the provision that the other members would raise an additional \$1,000. This amount was acquired through contributions ranging upward from a donation of one dollar.

In the November 12, 1879 issue of *The Alamance Gleaner*— a weekly newspaper which Captain E. S. Parker edited and published in the county seat— this notice appeared under the column entitled "Local, State and General":

"We learn that the erection of the Episcopal church building, at Company Shops, will very soon be begun. Mr. John Coble is the contractor."⁷

There is no evidence today as to what might have caused a delay in plans, but according to Mr. Bynum's annual report to the diocese at the May 1879 convention, the money had already been subscribed and the builders were making estimates. At that time it was expected that the building would be ready for consecration in the summer of that year.⁸ The report was entitled "Company Shops' Mission," and it contained some very interesting data:

Number of families	6	Contributions	
Whole number of souls	33	Rector's salary	160.00
Baptisms,		Parish expenses	50.00
infants 1, adults 5, total . . .	6	Total	210.00
Confirmations	7	Diocesan missions	221.00
Communicants		Without the Diocese	
added by removal 2,		Yellow fever sufferers	21.00
admission 6, whole number		Aggregate, about	242.00 ⁹
added 8, removed 1,			
present number	14		
Public services-on Sunday . . .	14		
on other days	6		
Holy Communion, number of			
times administered, public	3		

The following May, Bishop Sutton reported to the diocese that St. Athanasius Mission in Company Shops had a church which seated 150 people and was valued at \$1,200.00. He wrote:

“We are having very encouraging congregations, and have nearly completed a very neat church after a design by the Reverend J. A. Oertel. In the accomplishment of this work, we are greatly indebted, and our thanks are due to the N.C. Railroad for the donation of a very eligible lot, and to the Richmond & Danville Railroad for releasing the same to us; Captain W.A. Erwin, for his efficient services in the collection of funds; to Captain Wm. H. Turrentine, for his careful supervision; to Mr. Coble, the builder, for the faithful execution of the work so as to give us one of the best built churches in the Diocese, and last but not least, to my predecessor in this Mission, for the spiritual work that stirred up the hearts of the people to contribute freely of their means to erect this church. Our thanks are due also to a lady of the Mission for the stained glass windows for the chancel and for the circular window in the front gable, which are now being executed by H.T. Gernhardt, of Baltimore, Md. We are thankful to be able to state that when completed, it will be free from debt, and that we have not gone outside of the county in which it is sustained to collect funds for its erection.”¹⁰

By September the church was ready for services and *The Alamance Gleaner* carried a notice that “There will be services every night this week in the Episcopal church at Company Shops, and on the 3rd Sunday Bishop Lyman will preach and dedicate St. Athanasius.”¹¹ The Bishop consecrated the church on September 19, 1880. The deed of donation and the request of consecration were read by Reverend W.S. Bynum; the Reverend Dr. Sutton read the sentence of Consecration; morning prayer was said by Reverend Rich; and Reverend Cheshire and Bishop Lyman preached the sermon and administered Holy Communion.¹²

In the summer of 1881 Reverend Bynum took over the responsibilities of missionary from Bishop Sutton, and the following December a minister came from the Diocese of Albany to assume the work at the Episcopal Missions in High

Point, Greensboro and Company Shops. He was Alfred Houghton Stubbs.¹³

During Mr. Stubbs' first year a Sunday School was organized. Three men and two women made up the teaching staff. Lawrence Holt was the warden for the church, William Erwin served as secretary, and Frank Walton performed the duties of treasurer. There were ten families in the congregation and seventy members altogether.¹⁴

Mr. Will Erwin had been the main force behind getting the Sunday School started, and at about that same time he planted the maple trees in the church yard. According to one of his nephews, Mr. Erwin A. Holt, he also managed to secure a Christmas tree for the Sunday School in its early years. Mr. Erwin was called by this nephew "the main spring of the church and [the] most active and the strongest pillar so far as activity went."

Interest in securing a full-time rector for the church continued to grow. On one occasion Mrs. Lawrence Holt was chatting with Bishop Lyman at her home called "Sunnyside." Thinking she might just plant a seed in the right mind, she remarked in a dreamy fashion that it would be grand to have a resident minister. The Bishop gave her a very practical response with "Man cannot live on air." A handful of men, including Will Erwin and Lawrence Holt, gathered on Sunday, October 4, 1885 at the church to discuss finding a rector.

In January 1886, William L. Reaney moved to Company Shops with his family and while still a Deacon, became the first resident minister for the mission. The assistant minister at St. Bartholomew's in Pittsboro at that time was Franklin L. Bush. On the third Sunday of each month Mr. Bush came to Company Shops to administer Holy Communion until Mr. Reaney was ordained in July of 1887. A modest building was constructed on the church property to be used as a private school. Mr. Lawrence Holt employed the first teacher, and his children became the first pupils on Monday, October 10, 1887.¹⁶ The tutor's name was Henry T. Martin.¹⁷

At the annual diocesan convention for the Episcopal

church in North Carolina of 1888 four new congregations were admitted in the status of missions. Among the four was St. Athanasius Mission in the town which had been renamed Burlington. The two delegates from the mission were present when their names were called as being eligible to take their seats; they were F.O. Watson and E.K. Powe.¹⁸ C.B. Wright was an alternate from St. Athanasius.¹⁹

Erwin Holt wrote of Mr. Reaney that although he was a man committed to his studies, he "could not preach extemporaneously."²⁰ The Reverend Mr. Reaney and his family left Burlington in July 1889 and the following November Albert Rhett Walker assumed the responsibilities as minister for St. Athanasius. In his report to the diocesan convention the next spring Mr. Walker noted "the people have done remarkably well in completing the rectory within the year— with no debt resting on it."²¹ He was referring to the house which the parish had constructed for its rector on Morehead Street, between Broad and Mebane Streets.²² Albert Walker and his large family had a somewhat brief stay in Burlington; in July 1890 they left the parish.

The third resident minister was another gentleman named Walker; this one was Robert J. Walker, formerly of Alabama.²³ His pastoral duties grew to include St. John's mission in North Burlington which was established on February 28, 1891.²⁴ The diocesan convention of the Episcopal Church in North Carolina for 1892 was a significant one for St. Athanasius. It was in that year that the church was admitted into the convention with the full status of a parish.²⁵ In his report to that body the Reverend Robert Walker gave this description of the two missions which were then organized:

"St. John's mission, in North Burlington and St. Paul's Mission in East Burlington, are visited each week in alternate order. Every Thursday evening at 7:30 o'clock, many persons come to these services. As yet we have no chapels. Evening prayers (are) held in small rooms of homes of factory operatives. So much chapels are needed. Signs are encouraging. We pray for consecrated places in which to worship with this people."²⁶

In the fall of 1892 St. Athanasius was to lose perhaps its most active member. At that time William Allen Erwin had built his new mill called the Erwin Cotton Mills in West Durham and he moved to that city.²⁷ Mr. Walker and the rest of the congregation worked together to fill the void created by Mr. Erwin's departure.

The mission work which was organized out of St. Athanasius continued to reach to various parts of the county. In March 1893 St. Mary's Mission was organized for blacks. In that same year the bishop reported "the priest at Burlington is opening up mission work at Alamance Cotton Mills and Saxapahaw Cotton Mills."²⁸

Julian Hughes was a life long member of the Episcopal Church in Burlington and he was a writer who specialized in Alamance County. In a series of columns for the Burlington *Times-News*, he capsulized the history of the Episcopal church. He described Reverend Robert Walker as being "typically English. He sported a Van dyke beard and high silk hat like English business and professional men. . . He knew theology but wasn't so keen on economics— especially banking." It seems that Mr. Walker once overdrew his bank account buying meat to feed the buzzards which were starving in the snow. This second Mr. Walker took his leave in September 1895 and his successor, Henry Hobart Barber, arrived in December.²⁹ The church continued to grow under Mr. Barber's guidance. He had a particular interest in children and it was during his rectorship that the school building was doubled in size by an addition on the rear of the building. Then the school really became a Parish school and Hobart Barber was the first principal. Most of the students were Episcopalians. Quite a number of prominent citizens of Burlington received their early education at the Episcopal Parish School.³⁰ By 1898 the school had a maximum enrollment of 35 students. The fee was quite modest and the school was sustained by an unnamed parishoner.³¹

The year 1899 was marked with a goodly amount of re-furbishing for the church; it proudly recorded new carpeting,

a polished set of brasses for the altar and a set of altar cloths. The Bishop's chair and Litany desk of carved oak which the church still owns were included in the list of gifts of the congregation that year. The parish celebrated its twentieth anniversary on May 2, 1899. That date was selected because it is St. Athanasius Day and the patron Saint's day was proclaimed Parish Day with the plan that it would be observed annually. The offering that day went to establish a building fund for a new church to accommodate the ever-increasing congregation.³²

The 20th century was just a year old when Mr. Barber left Burlington.³³ The next Episcopal minister for the Burlington parish, Louis G. Wood, came in June 1901. Mr. Wood was described as "definitely English;" he delivered his sermons with a broad "A." Very little information remains about this gentleman except that he followed a very popular and effective minister and that he was less than delighted with Burlington and the church. Mr. Wood's tenure was brief; he departed at the end of April 1902.³⁴

The church had already sponsored service organizations among its membership. St. Andrew's Brotherhood, a men's group, had been active since the 1890's. In 1895 the Brotherhood was particularly active and J. Harper Erwin was the director of the young men.³⁵ It was in 1902 that the membership of two women's groups was recorded in the annual report of the North Carolina Women's Auxiliary which later was renamed the Episcopal Churchwomen. For that year, Mrs. Lawrence Holt served as President of the Burlington Women's Auxiliary with Mrs. James Williamson as Vice President and Miss Minnie H. Hicks as Secretary and Treasurer. The members of the chapter numbered twenty-four. The young women of the church had formed a chapter of the Junior Auxiliary. Their officers in 1902 were Miss Winnie Hicks, Director; Miss Bessie Shoffner, Secretary; and Miss Corinna Gant, Treasurer. This thriving group contained forty-five members.³⁶

The sixth minister for the Burlington parish began his

duties on July 20, 1902. He was the Reverend Horace Thornburgh Owen.³⁷ Several months after his arrival in Burlington Mr. Owen married Charlie Holt's widow. Mr. Owen was once described as a brilliant man and well educated but not one who was called to preach. Mr. and Mrs. Owen moved to New York in September 1904.³⁸ The next rector for the church had an even more brief term. He was James Dickinson Simmons, who served the parish from November 1904 until the end of July of the following year.³⁹ On a Sunday in mid-October 1905, the Reverend Milton Augustus Barber was formally instituted as rector of the parish by the Right Reverend Chesire, Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina. Mr. Barber had come from Texas⁴⁰ and he was the brother of St. Athanasius' former rector, Hobart Barber. Interestingly, Milton Barber was the last principal of the Parish School while his brother Hobart had been the first in 1895. The closing of that institution was certainly a milestone for that parish. During Milton Barber's tenure as minister another concerted effort was made to accumulate funds for a larger church building. It was in early April 1907 that Mr. Barber, who was especially noted for his clear delivery of sermons, departed St. Athanasius Parish to become the rector at Christ Church in Raleigh.⁴¹ It has been noted that Mr. Barber did not even have to refer to notes for his sermons. On two occasions the lights went out while he was preaching and he said, undaunted, "That's alright; I can preach in the dark." He did, too.⁴²

Edward Leslie Ogilby took charge of the parish immediately after the Reverend Mr. Barber moved to Raleigh. Mr. Ogilby worked in the Burlington church until October 1910. The project of a new building took definite shape in 1908.⁴³ An active Parish Aid Society was organized that year to work on details for the new church. The young people had greatly increased activity in the life of the parish also. Two guilds were formed, the King's Messengers Guild for girls and St. Timothy's Guild for boys.⁴⁴

People from parishoners to the Bishops had talked of the

need for a larger worship facility in the Episcopal church in Burlington since the early 1890s. Finally, in 1908 it began to look as if the dream were becoming a reality. After several attempts at raising money for this purpose, the work began in earnest in that year. Hobart B. Upjohn, of the firm Upjohn and Conable of New York, was hired as the architect. He designed a gothic structure and the plans were altered to increase the seating capacity in the nave of the church. The final plans were dated October and December of 1909. By that time there had already been a ground breaking for the building which was to face Davis Street. The lot for the new structure joined the back of the cemetery lot for St. Athanasius and extended to the corner of Broad and Davis Streets.

Lawrence Shackleford Holt and his wife Margaret Locke Erwin Holt gave the land and the building to the church. A plaque in the vestibule of the structure built of Mt. Airy granite commemorates that gift.

D.F. Lamb, a local contractor, supervised the construction of the project.⁴⁵ The granite came in great slabs. As the shipments arrived, the stones were cut by a small crew of German craftsmen. The stone cutting was done on a vacant lot on Lexington Avenue which was adjacent to the cemetery lot. The stone cutters were accomplished at their craft, but they were unable to read blueprints. Sidney Steele, one of the very active members of the parish, came to their aid. Mr. Steele made wooden models of the pieces which were needed in shapes other than squares and rectangles. Working from the architect's plans he produced wooden examples and the stone cutters were able to duplicate the items. One of the models he made was for the cross which now rests atop the nave of the church above the main entrance of the building.

It took nearly two years to build the church. The long period of construction was marred by the tragic death of Frank Lamb, the superintendant of construction. The contractor fell to his death from the scaffold on the tower in late August 1910.⁴⁶

Before the new structure was finished, the parish changed

ministers. Having been without a rector since the early fall, the congregation welcomed the Reverend John Benners Gible in February 1911.⁴⁷

The building was described as one of the finest church buildings in the state, and the graceful structure of granite was imposing and spacious. The tower rose to a height of seventy feet and the nave with the open roof was seventy feet long and forty feet wide. It seated four hundred people. The altar was properly elevated in the chancel which extended thirty-two feet from the nave. There were seven steps from the floor of the nave to the altar. The triple window over the altar depicted the Annunciation, Resurrection, and Ascension. The large window on the west wall depicting Christ blessing the little children, was the gift of Lawrence S. Holt. The gift of the land, church building and two stained glass windows were given by the Holts in memory of their daughter Emily who had died at age five in 1882. The church was named appropriately as the Church of the Holy Comforter. Two other windows were donated by parishoners when the building was completed. Since 1911 other stained glass windows have been added, making a panorama of the life of Christ. Other gifts at that time included a processional cross, alms basin, chalice, paten, and altar vestments. The cross which was placed on the altar was the original one from St. Athanasius. The interior finish of the church was dark oak.

The first service held in the new church was a splendid affair by all accounts. At 11:00 A.M. on November 5, 1911 the Church of the Holy Comforter in Burlington was consecrated and dedicated before a congregation which more than filled the structure. The Petition for Consecration was read by Sidney A. Steele, the Secretary and Treasurer of the parish; and the Title Deed conveying the property to the Diocese was read by Finley L. Williamson, Junior Warden.⁴⁸ The Petition for Consecration bore the names of the rector, the Reverend John Benners Gible; the Senior and Junior Wardens, Erwin A. Holt and Finley L. Williamson; Sidney Steele, the Secretary and Treasurer; and members of the

vestry, J.C. Squires, J. Zeb Walter, James S. Holt Jr., J.G. King and J. Harreman. The deed transferred the land and building from Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Holt to the Bishop and Trustees of the Diocese. Both documents had been signed on All Saints Day, November 1, 1911.⁴⁹ In the service which consecrated the Church of the Holy Comforter, Lawrence Holt stood on the second choir step and asked that the Bishop accept the gifts of the property and the building. In some well chosen words the Right Reverend Joseph Blount Chesire, D.D. accepted the gifts, and taking the legal documents from Mr. Holt, he placed them on the altar. The Instrument of Consecration was read by the Reverend Walter J. Smith of Charlotte. Bishop Chesire and Mr. Gibble were assisted by other visiting clergy. They were the Reverend Mr. Smith, the venerable Archdeacon Osborne of Charlotte; the Reverend Thomas L. Trott of Durham; the Reverend George W. Lay and the Reverend Milton A. Barber of Raleigh; and the Reverend S.J.M. Brown of Cooleemee.

Among the interesting notes of the day was the stipulation in the deed of conveyance that the pews in the church could never be sold or owned so that all of the church might always belong to all of its members. During the morning service Rufus Wheelwright Clark, a grandson of Lawrence and Margaret Holt, was baptized. There was another service held that night at which the Reverend Milton Barber, former rector of the parish, preached, Mr. Gibble presented a class of nine candidates, and Bishop Chesire confirmed those nine individuals.⁵⁰

St. Athanasius was not used for a time, and the Episcopal services were held in Holy Comforter. The milestone of the new church was only the beginning of a long tenure as rector for Mr. Gibble. He was the minister who led the transition from the little to the new big church. Not long after Holy Comforter had been consecrated, Mr. Gibble organized a week-long revival in the new facility. It was reportedly geared at increasing the membership of the church and the

Reverend John Matthews led the services assisted by the Reverend Mr. Gibble.

Mr. Gibble has been called "a positive theologian," one who fought lawlessness from the pulpit. He possessed a dynamic personality and introduced something new to the Episcopal church in at least one aspect. The Reverend Mr. Gibble was the first rector to use motion pictures as a means of teaching Scripture.⁵¹

One of the features of the new church of which the congregation was justly proud was the Estey pipe organ. The first organist and choirmaster was E. Seton Blyth who began working at the parish just a few months before the new church was opened. He organized a very active choir of men, women, and boys and some thirty-seven were robed, participating in the service of consecration.⁵²

The next building project for the parish was the construction of a new rectory on the corner of Davis and Lexington Streets, adjacent to the property which contained Holy Comforter. The nine room structure was completed in 1917. Mr. Gibble, its first occupant, reported that the house was valued at \$5,000 and was free from debt and equipped with modern conveniences.⁵³

The Reverend Mr. Gibble ended his eleven years with the Episcopal church in Burlington in the spring of 1922. The new rector for the parish, Thomas Fletcher Opie, took charge in January 1923.⁵⁴

On February 20, 1923 several young ladies of the church met to discuss organizing a club for young people. At that meeting Miss Jessamine Gant was elected President, Miss Nora Hughes was elected Leader, Mrs. J.H. Montgomery was elected Secretary and the corresponding secretary was Mrs. Wilson Rose. The ladies decided to spend half of their meeting on a selected topic of study and the second half as a social gathering. Two committees were appointed by Miss Gant, to serve these two areas. Dues were set at 10¢ per month and it was decided that the guild would adopt a child in the

Thompson Orphanage. In later meetings the guild decided to visit the sick and take them flowers while they were hospitalized. The guild also voted to place flowers on the altar on the Sunday nearest Mrs. Margaret Erwin Holt's birthday in her memory. At their first meeting these young women of the church had a lengthy discussion on choosing a name for the club. Two suggestions that evening were St. Margaret's Guild and The Margaret Holt Guild. Both names were considered with the intent of honoring Margaret Erwin Holt who had been Mrs. Lawrence S. Holt. The women who attended the first meeting and who with a few additions composed the membership were Mrs. W.S. Coulter, Miss Jessamine Gant, Mrs. Wilson Rose, Miss Sadie Steele, Miss Althea Ireland, Miss Winnie Squires, Miss Ruth King, Miss Nora Hughes, Miss Gena Squires, Mrs. C.M. Burgess, Miss Agnes King and Mrs. J.H. Montgomery. At their second meeting the members decided upon a name for the organization, "Saint Margaret's Guild of the Church of the Holy Comforter."⁵⁵ That was the beginning of a very active women's guild in the church. It originated in 1923 and has been in continuous service since that date.

A spacious Parish House was added onto the rear of the church proper in 1925 and was dedicated in late April 1925.⁵⁶ The new facility included an auditorium, a kitchen, a dining room, and space for Sunday School and other activities. A new kindergarten was organized and run in the Parish House. Mr. Lawrence Holt sponsored the school and the director of the program was Mrs. Trainam. The Reverend Mr. Opie initiated an interesting use of the auditorium. Instead of having evening services on Sundays, he showed the congregation a movie about Biblical characters and stories. On the following Sunday Mr. Opie took his sermon from the movie he had shown the week before.⁵⁷

Part of the money to furnish the new Parish House in 1925 came by special permission of Lawrence S. Holt from a trust fund which he had established two years before. Mr. Holt set up a unique trust of nearly half a million dollars to

benefit seventeen different institutions. Most of the beneficiaries were churches in Burlington. Others were Morganton churches and various North Carolina orphanages and schools. The Church of the Holy Comforter in Burlington was among the institutions mentioned and, interestingly enough, it is the only recipient for which Mr. Holt specified how the income was to be used. All of the remaining sixteen institutions were to use the Holt fund monies for general uses and purposes. Holy Comforter was instructed that such income be “. . . used and applied for the purpose of extending the missionary work of the Protestant Episcopal Church in said county of Alamance, North Carolina; by missionary work is meant the building and maintenance of missions under the care of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and religious instruction and spiritual uplift through schools maintained by said church;” The ways in which the rectors and vestries of the Church of the Holy Comforter have interpreted these instructions and used the income from this fund are an interesting story. Among the early uses was in aiding the construction of the new Parish House in 1925. Mr. Holt and his generous legacy have reached beyond the years of his life in missionary work in many ways.

On May 10 and 11, 1927 the Church of the Holy Comforter hosted the annual convention of the Diocese of North Carolina of the Episcopal Church. It was the 111th meeting for that body, but the first time that the church in Burlington hosted the convention of the clergy and laymen from the parishes in the diocese.⁵⁸

Mr. Opie left the parish in December 1930⁵⁹ and on the next Valentine's Day the church acquired a new rector. The Reverend David Thurber Eaton came to Burlington from the Diocese of New York.⁶⁰ The Church of the Holy Comforter made significant steps toward realizing its goal of missionary work in Alamance County under the leadership of the Reverend Mr. Eaton. Not long after his arrival his messages in the weekly bulletin witnessed his sense of humor and his prodding to get the congregation more involved in the life of the

church. One week he warned them not to fall subject to the "after-Easter slump,"⁶¹ and the next week he shared his views on church decorum. In the second bulletin he began by noting how little the parishoners participated in the services with feeble responses, dragging hymns and inaudible "Amens." He suggested that all stand at the first chord of the hymns so that "even if you do no more than move your lips you will be doing something, you will be giving the impression to your fellow-worshippers and to God, that you are really alive." That portion of the letter to the members was concluded by a reminder to get to church on time and not to leave until after the Choir had recessed noting "Sunday dinner will wait!"⁶²

An incident concerning Mr. Eaton is remembered by Hobart Steele who was a boy when it happened. Hobart's father Sidney Steele had been one of the very active members of the church and a Vestryman for years when he found the brass candlesticks from St. Athanasius wrapped in cloth under the church. The story was that some members of the congregation had objected to the use of the candlesticks saying they were too reminiscent of the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, the former rector who had purchased the candlesticks had acquired them in a rather devious way. It seems that the women of the church had accumulated enough money to purchase flower vases and they had turned the money over to the rector so that he could order the vases. Without a word to anyone, the minister had also ordered brass candlesticks since his suggestion of adorning the altar with candlesticks had met with such opposition. On the day that the lovely new vases were to be consecrated they were placed on the altar before the service but during the processional hymn the congregation got quite a surprise. The rector came into the church with the candlesticks in his hands and they were consecrated right along with the vases so that no one could utter a single objection. After the service the items disappeared and a great search was begun to locate the valuable brass items. They were found the first time in a cleaning woman's basket. The tale is that one of the most

vocal critics of the candlesticks had gotten someone who was not a church member to go in and hide them and the basket was the place the culprit selected. After another mysterious removal from the church, Mr. Sidney Steele later found the objects and he thought they were very handsome and valuable so he saved them. Years later Mr. Eaton came by the Steele's house and Sidney Steele told the rector the story of the candlesticks. When the minister asked to see the items, they were produced. Mr. Eaton told Sidney and Hobart Steele that he was going to put the brass objects on the altar and use them at Holy Comforter. Mr. Steele thought some opposition might occur but Mr. Eaton insisted on taking them. Sure enough the candlesticks adorned the carved altar the next Sunday and remained there. Not a single comment was made.

On All Saints' Day, November 1, 1934 St. Athanasius Church was rededicated for a unique ministry. It was reopened as a house of worship for the deaf congregation in Burlington and the surrounding area. Just three years after the dedication of Ephphatha Episcopal Church for the Deaf in Durham, the use of the little church in Burlington made the Diocese of North Carolina the only diocese in the country with two churches for the hearing impaired. These two churches drew quite a stalwart congregation to their services. The Episcopal church was practically the only church which held services which were signed especially for the deaf and this attracted persons with hearing impairments from a number of denominations and from all over the area. Carpools formed and it was customary to find St. Athanasius filled with people from as far as Winston-Salem or Danville, Virginia sitting among the people from Alamance County.

The day that St. Athanasius was rededicated was quite an historic one in the life of the church. The Bishop presiding, Edwin A. Penick, recored the events in this manner:

November 1: 10:55 a.m. In the graveyard of the Church of the Holy Comforter, Burlington, where many graves had been restored, I offered prayer.

11:00 a.m. St. Athanasius Church, Burlington. I formally reopened this edifice, unused as a place of public worship since 1911. Celebrated the Holy Communion, read an historical address and blessed an altar and altar cross given by Mr. and Mrs. Sidney A. Steele in memory of David Williams Cummings. The Rev. Mssrs. David T. Eaton, Rector and Albert E. Sanderson took part in the service. The entire service was signed by the Rev. Roma C. Fortune to the deaf members of the congregation to whom the restored church building had been turned over by the Rector, Wardens and vestry of the Church of the Holy Comforter.

At 4:00 that afternoon the Bishop also laid the cornerstone at Calvary Chapel at Piedmont Heights. Funds from the Lawrence Holt Trust had brought this vision of mission to fruition.⁶³ Seeing this chapel completed and put to use was a great source of pleasure to Mr. Holt because he was able to watch his idea become a real place of worship.

The altar in St. Athanasius is a free standing one which enables the minister to be seen at all times during the service. The kneeler which the clergy uses was built so that the congregation could see the minister sign the service. Visibility is particularly important for a hearing impaired congregation because signing is the means of communication. The Reverend Roma C. Fortune had been serving the deaf congregations first in Kinston and later in Durham since 1895. In 1906 the Reverend Oliver Whidlin came from Baltimore to get a deaf congregation organized and a class of seventeen persons was later presented for confirmation. One of the charter members of the class was Roma Fortune and in 1918 he was ordained a deacon at St. Phillip's Church in Durham. It was in 1929 that he was advanced to the priesthood. Although Mr. Fortune and his wife Elsie Carter Fortune were both deaf, their children did not have hearing impairments. Mr. Fortune took over the ministry to the deaf in Burlington as a part of his work in North and South Carolina.⁶⁴ Mr. Fortune preached at St. Athanasius monthly as a rule, and he found some members of the congregation who would hold Sunday School classes on the other Sundays. The Reverend Mr. Fortune served the Episcopal deaf congregation until his

death in 1942 and although he cannot be adequately represented here, he was, along with Robert Fletcher, primarily responsible for the ministry to the deaf in the entire Southeastern United States. Roma Fortune was probably the first hearing impaired person to be ordained to work in this region of the country. It was through his special ministry that the particular needs of the hearing impaired were met.

In early June 1939 David Eaton's resignation became effective and the following September, James Stanley Cox came from Virginia to become the rector at Holy Comforter. He was also named the Priest in charge of associated missions in Alamance County, which included Calvary Chapel and St. Andrew's, a smaller mission at Haw River.⁶⁵ Jim Cox may have easily been the best liked and most personable rector in the recent history of the church. He is described as having been a very warm person with an open manner and approach to people. His likeable personality and his well rounded talents as a minister are well remembered by the church members. The Reverend James Stanley Cox embodied the qualities and dignity desirable for a minister to possess. Jim Cox able fulfilled the many demands of his position as rector.

On January 5, 1941, St. Andrew's mission at Trollinwood was formally opened for worship. Like Calvary Chapel, this second mission in Alamance County was made possible largely through the Holt Trust.⁶⁶ By the fall of the following year, the Reverend Homer P. Starr had been assigned as Priest-in-Charge of Calvary. St. Andrew's chapels and the two missions became even more independent from the Church of the Holy Comforter. The Reverend Mr. Starr held a week long preaching mission at the chapels in October 1942 which climaxed with the Bishop's visit on October 25. Both chapels had been cleared from debt. St. Andrew's was consecrated at 4:30 on the afternoon of the 25th, and the Bishop consecrated Calvary at 8:00 the same evening.⁶⁷

It was one year later that the Reverend Roma Fortune

was stricken with a fatal heart attack and his widespread congregation mourned the loss of the vital force in the ministry to the deaf. His second son Jim took up his father's word with the hearing impaired in North Carolina. At first he was entitled layreader to the deaf,⁶⁸ then missionary⁶⁹ and finally minister to the deaf following his ordination in February, 1944.⁷⁰ Jim Fortune based himself in Durham and continued to make the circuit of the groups of hearing impaired persons.

September 1943 marked the end of the stewardship of Jim Cox as rector of Holy Comforter. To the great disappointment of the congregation, the Reverend Mr. Cox took the post of rector of St. Paul's church in Winston-Salem.⁷¹ His successor, Lewis Fry Schenck, arrived in December and had transferred from the Diocese of East Carolina.⁷² Mr. Schenck was another minister whose personality aided him in his approach to the ministry. Many parishoners knew him and his family socially as well as within the activities of the church. As usual people responded differently to Mr. Schenck; being socially active and having an easy-going air does not always endear a minister to everyone, but his likeable manners and very personable way made him recognized as a very good rector to many in the church. Mr. Schenck took special interest in the history of the parish. He gathered the facts about the early life of St. Athanasius and encouraged Erwin A. Holt, one of Lawrence Holt's sons, to write his personal recollections. Mr. Schenck wrote an article for the *Burlington Daily Times-News* for the special edition commemorating the county's 100th anniversary. That article evidences a writing ability and has proved to be a very useful outline for this account of the church history.

The deaf congregation at St. Athanasius received a real boon when Burlington acquired a new fire chief in October 1948. The new man was Chief Roma Fortune and when he and his wife Lois moved from Greensboro to Burlington it meant that another member in the same Fortune family was associated with the Burlington deaf congregation. Chief

Fortune is the Reverend James Fortune's older brother and as a hearing person, working and worshipping with the hearing impaired has always been a special part of the Chief's life. Falling in with St. Athanasius was a natural thing for the Fortunes, and the Chief and Mrs. Fortune became an integral part of the congregation. The Chief was a great organizer and expediter, and a special personal friend to the hearing impaired. He continued to be a liason between the hearing impaired and the hearing world. Since his childhood with deaf parents, the role of liason and interpreter had naturally fallen his way and has been a responsibility which the Chief has regarded as a pleasure and kind of personal privilege to fulfill. One of the major projects which Chief Fortune primarily engineered was the remodeling of the old school building which stands beside St. Athanasius. The building has been enlarged and is now modernized and with heating and air conditioning, providing an infinitely more practical place for worship and meetings in extreme temperatures. As a tribute to the Fortunes, the members of St. Athanasius named the structure the Fortune Fellowship Hut.

Lewis Schenck had submitted his resignation and the vestry accepted in December 1949. The Reverend Mr. Schenck was called to the Diocese of Atlanta.⁷³ It was not until the following July that his successor, the Reverend Robert Findlay Thomas assumed the position of rector of Holy Comforter. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas had moved from West Virginia.⁷⁴ Bob Thomas had quite a long tenure at Holy Comforter. His strength as a rector lay in his preaching ability. During the nearly ten years that he was with the Burlington parish some very strong groups were organized through the efforts of the congregation. Instead of overwhelming the parishoners with an outgoing personality, perhaps Mr. Thomas' approach to his tasks encouraged people to be active in the church and to see to it themselves that things happened as they should. Especially during the time

that Dr. Bill Johnston was Senior Warden, he and some other men like Tom Swain, Hobart Steele, "H." May and Clary Holt revitalized the Men's Club. There were regular meetings for that group and a breakfast for the men once a month following early communion on Sunday. The Men's Club also took on the task of co-ordinating a state-wide project of purchasing Christmas gifts for all of the children in the Thompson Orphanage. The men also had big fish fries in the church yard for several years.

The Women's Auxiliary had always been organized in circles. Since they first organized themselves after the turn of the century, donating funds and articles of clothing and the like for foreign missions had been a part of their service work. For years the Women's Auxiliary also had a big turkey dinner between Thanksgiving and Christmas as a money making endeavor for their various projects. Althae Riddle headed that dinner for many years. The women took on another mammoth task in the fall; they began an annual church bazaar which became an institution in the city of Burlington. The bazaar featured handmade crafts and gift items which the women began making in January for the following fall. There were also piles of baked goods and meals were served that day. One of the most intriguing things was a room full of odds and ends out of dusty attics and basements which was called the "White Elephant." The proceeds from this event went to missionary funds as well as for needs in Holy Comforter. Ethel Gant and Viola Ireland were two active members of the Women's Auxiliary whose talents shone particularly through bazaar work and organizing. These two ladies also engineered any number of monthly luncheons for the women's group. The scores of people who ended up working on the annual ordeal are entirely too long to list; it was a real fellowship happening for the parish and entire families became involved in a number of different aspects. A whole generation was raised going to bazaars. Holy Comforter had held these affairs since the late 1940's. The Women's Auxiliary saved most of the proceeds from bazaars

and established a building fund to meet the needs for a facility for parish activities. They had accumulated \$10,000 when it was discovered that the timbers under the Parish House had rotted out and the entire basement of the building had to be restored. The Vestry came to the Women's Auxiliary and explained what extensive work had to be done to correct the unsafe situation. The women's building fund was the only available revenue. The women readily agreed to the use of the fund but they began the very next fall to accumulate money for another building fund.

In November 1960 Bob Thomas submitted his resignation and a thorough search for his successor began. During the interim months the Vestry— especially the Senior Warden, Harry C. James— took on the responsibility of completely running the parish. A number of supply priests came to perform services at Holy Comforter for the next several months. Among them were Mr. Robert Ladeloff, Mr. Frank Pulley, Dr. Franklin Young from Duke and Mr. I. Harding Hughes, a retired minister who had served as the Chaplain at St. Mary's School. Mr. Hughes had such a warm and delightful personality that he was a great support to Harry James in his duties and to the parish in helping people through the difficult period between rectors.

Quite a number of men and women in the parish were split into groups which were sent around to hear various Episcopal priests on Sundays in hopes of finding a new rector for the church. The Senior and Junior Wardens, Harry James and Ike Grainger, had asked Bishop Baker for names of ministers for the groups to consider. Before long, all the groups had gone to hear all of the ministers and no one had found a priest they really wanted for Holy Comforter. The wardens went back to the Bishop with a request for more names. Late one afternoon, the Bishop called Harry James and asked him to bring Ike Grainger to have dinner with him in Raleigh. At that meeting Bishop Baker gave the men one more name; it was the name of a young minister who was married and had three children. He was then serving the

parish in Erwin, North Carolina and the Bishop told the Burlington men that he thought they would like him, and besides, he was running out of names. So the groups began going to Erwin and returned with glowing reports of this energetic preacher by the name of Gene Bollinger. It was decided that Thomas Eugene Bollinger was to be the next rector of Holy Comforter. He began his work at the parish on April 24, 1961.⁷⁵

The first order of business in preparing for the arrival of the new rector and his family was putting the rectory in good condition. Perhaps some youthful exuberance had prompted Gene Bollinger to insist that he wanted to stay in the old rectory and be right next door to the church. Getting the run-down house in good order was a huge project, and it seemed that every adult in the church turned out to see it done. The Vestry borrowed \$7,500 from the Holt Missionary Fund which was later paid back to the penny. It took nearly every cent of that money for the supplies and materials needed for the refurbishing. The men got ladders and hoses and washed down the entire exterior of the house to make it look like a brand new paint job. The kitchen was completely done over by talented men such as John Ireland. The men did an enormous amount of remodeling by working at night. Meanwhile the Episcopal Churchwomen, previously called the Women's Auxiliary, decided that each Circle could take a room in the house and they worked over every inch of the place from floors to ceilings.

One of the first things which Gene Bollinger did after his work began in Burlington was to hire a new music director. He found a young man who had one year before taking a position at Sweetbriar College and who had agreed to spend that year at Holy Comforter. Gene was particularly interested in having an active program for youth, and youth choirs were to be an important part of that program. Lou Mize, the new organist and music director, revitalized that aspect of church life. He was a marvelous teacher and friend to the children in the Carol and Cherub Choirs. The ranks of the

adult choir also increased. There was no money allotted specifically for choir robes, but certain mothers of the young songsters arranged to buy the fabric at cost and actually cut and sewed fifty little choir robes and beanies. Every member of the junior choirs was outfitted for their great debut at Thanksgiving 1961.

Lib Denny followed Lou Mize as organist and music director and in her special way, easily won the respect and affection of the children in the choirs and with the adults, the music program flourished.

Gene Bollinger worked in a tremendous whirl of energy. He possessed a very friendly nature, a great sense of humor, a healthy dose of common sense and a real talent for relating to people. He knew how to communicate with people and he believed that was an important part of his ministry. It has been lightly suggested that only the federal government sends out more paper than Gene mailed out to the congregation on church matters. He wanted interested persons to have a part in the life of the church and he began to see that committees were formed to see things done. The end product of all that paper work and all those committees was that every person had a job to do at the church and the increased involvement was reflected in the activities, worship attendance, membership and in the general well-being of the parish. Gene was very open to groups having their own studies within the church and he was always available as a reference source. He took great interest in the Church School program and worked over the curriculum carefully with the teachers, bringing it to life. Mr. Bollinger taught the Confirmation classes himself. He had the candidates go through a two year program on Sunday afternoons. The first year he taught them the Bible. The second year they studied the Episcopal church, its rituals and traditions, while he prepared them for Confirmation.

November 1961 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Church of the Holy Comforter. November 5 through 12 of that year was set aside as the celebration of that anniversary and the parish turned in to work on the events. Sunday,

November 5 started the week off with Bishop Baker celebrating Holy Communion. There was an historical display after the 11:00 service. That evening the Episcopal Young Churchmen had their historical program. Monday morning the most humorous event of the week occurred in the historical program and luncheon for the women of the parish. A skit was presented at the meeting to characterize past Women's Auxiliary meetings. The members of the audience such as Mrs. Roger Gant, Sr., Lib Harman, Margaret Brown, Dodi James and Ethel Gant started the skit off by discussing where the past President was who was supposed to come in and take over the meeting. Gene Bollinger was sitting beside Ethel Gant and when she said that Dodi James as Secretary had better start the meeting, Mr. Bollinger thought the actual meeting was in progress. The whole group broke into gales of laughter when Mary Schoonmaker finally rushed in dressed for golf a la 1920's carrying her clubs and a huge alarm clock. When Mary took over, her first line was "Good morning ladies and Episcopalians." Then she called for the various reports which were as farcical as the President's attire. Following the reports, the President turned the meeting over to "whoever has the program" and she hurried out saying she was already late for a golf game.

An Anniversary Banquet for the entire parish was held on Wednesday night and a past rector, the Very Reverend James S. Cox who was then the Dean of the Cathedral of St. Andrew, Honolulu, was the speaker. The week-long celebration was completed by an Anniversary Service at 11:00 on November 12 at which Jim Cox delivered the sermon.

One of the first things which Gene Bollinger did to bring about more involvement of the parish in the life of the community of Burlington was to join the ministerial association. He was the first rector the church had ever had who participated in this ecumenical group. Gene also took an active part in the work of the Diocese and he served on several committees giving the Burlington church a voice in matters outside its immediate family.

The numerous activities offered by the parish began to draw people in and quite a group of students from Elon College became active members at Holy Comforter. There was no student union at the college then and in the little town there were no gathering places for the students. Earl Danieleley had been serving as President of the college for a brief time, and Gene Bollinger approached the new President on the possibility of establishing an Episcopal student center on the campus. Dr. Danieleley was very open to the idea even though the school is affiliated with the Christian church. The women of the church took the project on once that door had been opened, and with some of the Holt Missionary Fund money, a downstairs apartment was rented in a house on O'Kelly Avenue right behind the President's home at Elon. Catherine Chandler was one of the initial organizers and with the talents of people like Rose Anne Gant, "B" Holt and Olivia Woodin, she furnished and decorated a very inviting campus center. The front room became a chapel and Valeria Scott coordinated the hostesses who were women of Holy Comforter volunteering their time. The center became a gathering place for the students and some faculty. It had been set up as a coffee house but was expanded to meet more needs of campus ministry. In July 1963 Harry Woggon, a recently ordained priest, took the position of assistant to the rector at Holy Comforter.⁷⁶ His main duty was the campus center at Elon. Early morning communion was held and often vespers was said in the evening. In the fall a mailing list went out to all the Episcopal students at Elon to acquaint them with the center and there was at least one party a year for the students. The Chandlers played a very active part in the life of the center and among those students while they attended Elon. The Woggons only stayed in Burlington a little over a year, but the campus center was active until it outlived its usefulness with the arrival of the student union.

Another church center was sponsored jointly by St. Andrew's and Holy Comforter and this one was located in the Cum Park Plaza shopping center. That center was started about 1964.

In 1963 a building program was in full swing at Holy Comforter for a new Parish House. The physical building of the church was to be doubled in size and it was decided that the new building would extend from the old Parish House toward Broad Street. The new structure would house offices, a library and a music room, a number of classrooms for Sunday School and meetings, a spacious new kitchen, and a large room for recreation and dining. The entire project was a tremendous undertaking involving the congregation on a very large scale. Those who had major tasks worked ardously to the end. The Senior Wardens during the design and fund-solicitation phases were I.B. Grainger, Jr. and Dr. Bill Johnston. Harry C. James had the awesome task of being the general chairman and an important chairman under him was Robert E. Wooten who headed the designing and planning committee. Roger Gant, Jr. and Kenneth Gant, Jr. coordinated the fund raising. They organized groups for this purpose and for publicizing the program within the congregation. There was a parish dinner to raise money. William deR. Scott, Jr. served as publicity chairman and the fund treasurers were Eugene B. Hardin and Thomas T. Swain. The architect was Vernon E. Lewis and the plans were drawn and dated 1963. There was considerable discussion as to the name for the huge room with the cathedral ceiling which was to serve as a dining and meeting room and as a recreation center. There were any number of suggestions as to appropriate names, most of them being to name it after someone or some family, but nobody came up with anything really striking. During the process of the planning and then the building Mrs. Roger Gant, Jr. began to refer to the massive room simply as "The Great Hall," and the name became permanent. Roger Gant, Jr. was the Senior Warden by the time construction began and W.H. May, Jr. was the chairman in charge of construction. The furnishings committee had a great deal more to do than just furnish and decorate the new building, because so much was done at the same time to improve the rest of the church. The old kitchen and dining rooms were

torn out to make a parlor. Old offices and robing rooms were shuffled around to make the best use of the new and old spaces. Raye P. Woodin was in charge of the furnishings committee and he hand picked two extremely talented assistants in Mrs. Roger Gant, Jr. and Mrs. Harry James. A number of memorials were given by members of the church and Miss Corinna Gant and Mrs. Walter Brown, Jr. managed those items. There were new lights for the nave and sanctuary and the church was even recarpeted. Since a new rectory had been built on Forestdale Drive, the old rectory next to the church was temporarily used for meeting rooms and it served a special purpose while the new carpet was put down. Each pew in the church was carefully numbered and Tom Swain drilled holes in the floor marking the exact locations for the pews. Then those long wooden structures were stored in the old rectory and on its porch until they were painstakingly returned to the same spots each one had occupied since its first installation.

A special service of thanksgiving and opening of the new parish house and dedication of memorials was held Sunday afternoon on October 10, 1965. Bishop Thomas A. Fraser and the rector of Holy Comforter, Gene Bollinger, officiated.

It was during 1965 that the parish of Calvary Chapel merged with that of Holy Comforter. The mission congregation had dwindled until it was decided that the two groups could be best served in one place. St. Andrew's at Haw River continued to operate as a separate entity, however.

The Church of the Holy Comforter had its own community enrichment program which made excellent use of the new Great Hall. Perhaps the most memorable of the activities was the lecture series by such speakers as Dr. Bernard Boyd, a religion professor from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. These lectures were made available to the public at no charge.

Through his involvement in the Community Council, Gene Bollinger became aware of the need in the county for a

school for a certain group of special children. Although these children had impairments, they were both trainable and educable, but their immediate need was to become better equipped to deal with other people. Gene Bollinger, Rose Anne Gant and "B" Stone were on the original committee to create a program to meet this specific community need.

John and "B" Stone did a thorough study of the problem and the program began to take form. The Vestry supported the idea of using the Great Hall for the program which would take place during the weekdays. Carmen Wagner and "B" Stone took on the tremendous job of surveying and admitting students. The state regulations for a school of this type were so stringent that the church could not possibly meet all of them at first. Holy Comforter financed the school almost totally the first year, making the choice to go ahead with the program and to come up to the state requirements as it was feasible. The program was entitled the Happy Time School. It was an amazing project from its inception. Two days a week children with emotional and mental impairments came to the church and the remaining three days were scheduled for children with physical impairments. Following Gene Bollinger, John Freeman—who was very accomplished finding sources for funding—chaired the program. Holy Comforter continued to support the program, and volunteers partially staffed the school. Once it was established, the United Way in Burlington began to contribute funds, followed by the Association for Retarded Citizens. An organization for cerebral palsy also contributed money. Eventually the program met state regulations, and was taken over by the Alamance-Caswell Area Mental Health and Mental Retardation Program. It outgrew the facilities of the church and in 1978 it moved to its own building. The Happy Time School which began at the Church of the Holy Comforter has been studied for its excellent program and is one of the largest schools of its kind in the state. By meeting the need with the creation of the Happy Time School, the Church of

the Holy Comforter reached into the community and became an active part of making lives better outside its own members.

Another community oriented program at Holy Comforter was giving Christmas gifts to children in foster homes. Children in foster homes made Christmas lists and the congregation gathered toys, gifts and clothing in accordance with the requests. It became quite a big project providing for these children all over Burlington, but another even more significant thing came out of the project beside the good feelings of playing Santa Claus. Through the contact which the Christmas gifts afforded, it was discovered that there was a whole group of junior high school age youngsters who had no adult supervision during the summer months. They were too old for the other recreational programs offered, but too young to have full time jobs. Since their foster parents worked, they went unsupervised. The possibility of starting a summer program centered around recreation for this group was being considered about the time that Gene Bollinger submitted his resignation and became the rector of St. Phillip's in Durham. Holy Comforter and Burlington lost a very active and effective chairman when Mr. Bollinger left; he was a rector who appealed to all age groups and perhaps one of the finest compliments paid him was that he is a man who really listens when you talk to him.

Once again committees were organized in the parish to decide on a new rector for the church. People soon began talking about a very vibrant preacher they had heard at St. Timothy's in Winston-Salem. He was a priest who had begun his ministry in the state by serving at St. Paul's Mission in Cary and also being the Episcopal Chaplain at North Carolina State University, then State College in 1958.⁷⁷ The minister's name was Roderick Laury Reinecke and he became the seventeenth rector for the church on February 24, 1968.⁷⁸

Rod Reinecke joined the ministerial association in Burlington and in this and many other ways has lead the parish

to enrich its own life through programs of outreach to the community. One of his great challenges in his stewardship at Holy Comforter has been to make the most imaginative and best use of the Holt Missionary Fund. That farsighted gift has supplied the parish with the means of responding to special needs which touch the parish and the area around it. Although the role of the church in the Happy Time School decreased, it came to maturity while Rod Reinecke served as rector. A major project which Mr. Reinecke played a significant part in starting was the summer program for the junior high school age students. He appealed to the Vestry for permission to use the Great Hall for that purpose and sighted to them the history the church had of letting other groups use the facility. The use was okayed and the Holt Fund supported the project. Joe Davidson and Rod Reinecke were the organizers at that point and Eddie Williams was another man in Burlington who helped get things underway. Melvin Dowdy ran the actual program the first year and there were some 180 young people participating. The name given to the endeavor was Inner City Youth, and it was a most appropriate title since the Great Hall was so nicely air conditioned that it really felt "ICY." David Maynard became extremely involved in the ICY project. He was hired to head the whole program. Rod Reinecke could envision this as an ecumenical mission. After it was underway at Holy Comforter, other churches did become involved. There were as many as five churches actively supporting ICY with staff and transportation; they were the Episcopal, United Church of Christ, Methodist, Presbyterian and Catholic churches. This was probably the greatest extent of ecumenical cooperation the city of Burlington had ever experienced. One summer there were over nine hundred youths in the program.

Mr. Reinecke was also an organizer of the community Thanksgiving Communion service in which congregations from several denominations worship together rotating from church to church each year. There have been similar programs among the downtown churches for Lenten services.

In June 1969 Edward Martin Covert was ordained to the Diaconate and he was assigned to assist the rector at Holy Comforter in Burlington.⁷⁹ He served in this capacity until he was transferred to the Diocese of South Carolina in June 1971.⁸⁰

It has been noted that the period of upheaval and tremendous change which has characterized the years 1968-1979 would have made the stewardship of an Episcopal church difficult at best. It is rather remarkable that this trying period also marks the longest rectorship to date, and it certainly says something of the nature of a good relationship between the rector and this parish. The changing role of women in the world as well as in the church has been an interest for Mr. Reinecke. Holy Comforter has not had a very long record for women's involvement in the church beyond the parish. It began when Ethel Gant became the Chairman of the District of Guilford and served a six-year term on the board of the Diocesan Episcopal Churchwomen. Rose Anne Gant followed her by election to the chair of the Convocation and she also served on the board for the Episcopal Churchwomen and later on a Diocesan committee for the Terraces. The first woman who served on the Standing Committee of the Diocese was Mrs. W. Clary Holt. Mrs. Holt was also the first woman to be elected to the Vestry at Holy Comforter and the first woman to hold the position of Senior Warden. Another landmark for the parish occurred through Rod Reinecke's work. May Catherine Pugh became the first female chalice bearer in the Diocese of North Carolina.

Rod Reinecke and the Vestry of Holy Comforter have worked out a system by which he has been allowed to expand his own training, particularly the skills in counseling. Rod has a special devotion to the care and nurture of the individual. He has won great respect, especially within the parish, for his genuine attentiveness to people in trouble. He has been largely responsible for the broadening of the parish's scope of the kinds of things that can become part of corporate worship. The transition to the new Prayer Book has been controver-

sial at Holy Comforter, but Mr. Reinecke has instituted a number of things to bring worship and the sacraments closer to the people. His custom of walking down the aisle to show a candidate for Holy Baptism to the congregation is exemplary of his sharing and open approach to the ministry.

September 30, 1977 marked the Reverend Jim Fortune's retirement as the Missionary to the deaf. On October 1, 1977 the Diocese of North Carolina acquired a new minister for the hearing impaired congregations. At the request of the deaf persons, the new minister, the Reverend Barry Kramer, based himself in Mebane to be centrally located and thereby particularly accessible to the group at St. Athanasius. In exchange for being a priest on call in the absence of the rector, the Vestry of Holy Comforter provides Mr. Kramer office space. The harmonious relationship and record of mutual interest between the parishes of St. Athanasius and Holy Comforter continue.

It would seem to be the nature of religion and churches, if not of people, that the life of a religious institution changes in complexion and mood like all of history. The life of the Episcopal church in Burlington, North Carolina has been both active and inactive, self-concerned and outwardly concerned, united and splintered. Through tremendous transitions, difficult and energetic and uplifting times, it has never divided but has remained one church through its one hundred years, and that may be a record for the Diocese. There have been consistently strong Vestries which have lead the parish and they have undoubtedly contributed to the solidarity of the church. Somehow the feeling has always prevailed that "I may not like all of the things going on, but no one is going to drive me away from my church." The Episcopal congregation has grown from the handful of people in Company Shops to the hundreds of citizens in the county who make up the Church of the Holy Comforter, St. Athanasius Chapel for the Deaf and St. Andrew's Church, Haw River.

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These people contributed to this history with their special memories, ideas and assistance:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mrs. Tom Brannock | Mr. George A. Long |
| Mrs. Walter M. Brown, Jr. | Mr. Lawrence Morrow |
| Mr. and Mrs. Roma C. Fortune | Mrs. Peggy Parker |
| Mrs. Roger Gant, Sr. | The Reverend Roderick L. Reinecke |
| Mrs. Allen E. Gant | Mrs. Norman W. Riddle, Sr. |
| Mrs. Roger Gant, Jr. | Mrs. William deR. Scott, Sr. |
| Mr. W. Clary Holt | Mr. Hobart T. Steele |
| Dr. G. Eugene Holt | Mrs. John B. Stratford |
| Mr. and Mrs. John R. Ireland | Mrs. Lois Tekely |
| The Reverend Barry Kramer | |

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Resident Clergy for St. Athanasius and Holy Comforter

The Rev. William L. Reaney	January 1886-July 1889
The Rev. Albert Rhett Walker	November 1889-July 1890
The Rev. Robert J. Walker	August 28, 1890-September 1895
The Rev. Henry Hobart Barber	December 1895-January 31, 1901
The Rev. Louis G. Wood	June 13, 1901-April 30, 1902
The Rev. Horace Thornburgh Owen	July 20, 1902-September 1904
The Rev. James Dickinson Simmons	November 1904-July 31, 1905
The Rev. Milton Augustus Barber	October 15, 1905-March 31, 1907
The Rev. Edward Leslie Ogilby	April 7, 1907-September 25, 1910
The Rev. John Benners Gibble	February 2, 1911-March 1922
The Rev. Thomas Fletcher Opie	January 1923-December 1930
The Rev. David Thurber Eaton	February 14, 1931-June 10, 1939
The Rev. James Stanley Cox	September 1, 1939-September 1943
The Rev. Lewis Fry Schenck	December 1, 1943-December 1, 1949
The Rev. Robert Findlay Thomas	July 1, 1950-November 30, 1960
The Rev. Thomas Eugene Bollinger	April 24, 1961-December 1, 1967
The Rev. Roderick Laury Reinecke	February 24, 1968-the present

Assistants to the Rector of Holy Comforter

The Rev. Harry Woggon	June 29, 1963-1964
The Rev. Edward Martin Covert	June 24, 1970-June 20, 1971

Missionaries to the Deaf

The Rev. Roma Coxey Fortune	November 1, 1934-October 1942
The Rev. James Robertson Fortune	October 1942-September 30, 1977
The Rev. Barry Kramer	October 1, 1977-the present

The information for this table was compiled from the Journals of the Diocese of North Carolina of the Protestant Episcopal Church from a letter from Erwin A. Holt to Lewis Schenck written April 27, 1945.

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