Qualls brings interesting background to Apex Baptist Church

By Rosemary Wagner

A lot of things seem to "just happen" for Phillip Qualls, the new minister at Apex Baptist Church. Qualls was perfectly happy being a pastor at Moymeyer Baptist Church in Nash County when he heard about the opening at Apex Baptist Church. "I really loved what I was doing there," Qualls said in a recent interview. "It was a good experience and I had no intention of leaving. But through a personal friend they got my name here."

Qualls seems to end up doing a lot of things when there were no intentions in the beginning. When Qualls was attending East Carolina University in 1963, he had no idea he would end up being a minister. "An interesting thing is that I didn't feel the leadership into the ministry until I was 31," Qualls said. "Then I had to go back to ECU and finish up so I could go to the seminary."

Qualls attended Southeastern Seminary at Wake Forest from 1978-1980 where he got a Masters of Divinity. Qualls married his wife before he ever went into the seminary. In fact he was married, had two children and was working in the business world before he ever became a minister. "The funny thing about it is that I married my wife Kathy while I was still working for Sears," Qualls said. "When we got married she had no idea she would be married to a minister. But she makes a very good minister's wife."

After Qualls got out of the ministry he went right to Moymeyer Baptist Church. Although he loved it and he made a lot of good friends there, he is glad to be in Apex. "Apex has a history of having long-term pastors," Qualls said. "The average time for a Southern Baptist pastor to stay in a church is two years. So for Rhonda Robbins, the former pastor, who is now deceased, 25-26 years is a long time."

But Qualls is glad to see that Apex keeps pastors for a long time and he thinks he knows why. "Apex is a good town and in a good location," Qualls said. "It has a lot to offer families. The universities that I have seen are great and the schools for children seem to be good too. Also Apex is conveniently located near the site of the Baptist State Convention."

The convention is in Cary. Qualls also likes Apex because it has a close link with the other Southern Baptists in the state. "I think the way the community and the church family are warm and open and very supportive has a lot to do with the unusually long tenure of a pastor here," he said.

Qualls, his wife, and two children, Kevin 12, and Dana 10, are now living in the parsonage at the Apex Baptist Church. He is looking forward to seeing it grow spiritually and physically as more people move into the community. Also he is about to start making plans to build a new sanctuary and a new educational building.

There was a meeting Sunday to appoint a building committee but Qualls feels he and his wife are adjusting to Apex as well. The new minister said that because he was once in the business world, he can relate to the people of the community well. "My experiences in the business world help me as a minister now," Qualls said. "I was active in the church. I was a Deacon in two churches so I can relate to the lay people in the community. I have been there sitting in the pew and I know how it feels."

Qualls feels he as an minister has high hopes for Apex Baptist Church. He is looking forward to seeing it grow spiritually and physically as more people move into the community. Also he is about to start making plans to build a new sanctuary and a new educational building.