About the church: The Rev. David Gales is celebrating his 25th anniversary this year as pastor of Plaza Baptist Church. Gales said he no longer thinks of his job as a profession. In his 25 years at the church, Gales has performed 114 baptisms, and 780 people have joined. "This church has become family to me. I've baptized them, married them, buried their family members. It's never a profession with me anymore. They're a family," he said.

Plaza Baptist was organized in 1938 and began meeting at a site on 36th Street. The church moved in the early 1950s to The Plaza, a prosperous neighborhood that served the mill community. When the three area mills closed a few years ago, the church pledged to remain in the area to serve its members.

Plaza Baptist now has 346 members who travel from all over Charlotte to attend the worship services. The church averages 172 at the Sunday worship service. Visitors can easily follow the order of the service in the church bulletin. Although music is a big part of the worship services, services also contain scripture reading, a children's sermon and an invitation to people that we're one of the strongest missions efforts in the Carolinas," Gales said. "(Plaza Baptist) has given over $2 million to missions efforts in 25 years. We've had couples from the church go out to the missions field, and the church has started five daughter churches in Indiana."

About the pastor: The Rev. David Gales, 56, and his wife, Phyllis, have two grown sons.

Gales likes to preach through one book of the Bible at a time.

He says he's enjoyed so many years at Plaza Baptist Church because the congregation has remained focused on missions work. "Our church isn't a big church, but the Lord has singled it out in the area of missions. We know why we're here," he said.

Details: The church address is 3321 The Plaza.

The worship schedule is: Sunday school at 9:45 a.m., worship at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. The church also has a Wednesday night service at 7:30 p.m.

For details, call the church at 234-3913.

Compiled by Brian Steiner
After his farewell sermon, titled "What a Wonderful Journey," Gales gets a hug from church member Sharon Rogers. During the service, Gales was presented with a plaque honoring him with the title pastor emeritus.
A lot of clergy come and go. The Rev. David Gales came to Charlotte's Plaza Baptist Church and stayed nearly 32 years before retiring on Sunday. Gales, 63, preached his final sermon at the 320-member congregation, ending a ministry during which he baptized 743 members and helped lead 16 church members to enter full-time ministry.

The church, located at The Plaza near East 36th Street, held a dinner Saturday night to honor Gales and his wife, Phyllis. Sunday, the topic for his final sermon was “What a Wonderful Journey.”

“We decided we would just bloom where we were planted,” Gales said. “I just couldn’t leave the church. The Lord blessed us.” — KEN GARFIELD

Since his arrival at Plaza Baptist Church in 1971, Gales has preached 3,280 sermons and baptized 743 people.
Rev. Gales Revival Speaker

Parkwood Baptist Church will join with other churches in connection with the Crusade of the Americas.

Rev. David A. Gales, a former member and deacon of West Point Baptist Church, will be the speaker for revival services, beginning Monday and continuing through April 13 at the Parkwood Church.

Presently, he serves as pastor of Pitts Baptist Church, Harrisburg. He was ordained into the ministry in 1966 by the West Point Church and studied at Wingate Junior College and Pfeiffer College.

Services will be held daily at 7:30 p.m. There will be special music and a nursery will be provided for small children. Rev. N. Curtis Knowles is pastor of the church.