The congregation of the sponsoring church voted two weeks ago to call 77-year-old Bill Bigham as mission pastor. He officially takes that post Sunday morning.

Bigham, an ordained minister, has lived in Denver for the past 12 years. A 1980 graduate of Greensboro College, he holds a bachelor's degree in religion and philosophy and is currently working on a master's program through the extension department of Southeastern Seminary at Wake Forest.

"I'm really looking forward to working with the mission," Bigham said last week. "I believe a solid foundation has been laid... we are excited about building upon it."

Bigham, a native of Charlotte, moved to Denver in 1970 with his parents Mr. and Mrs. W.C. Bigham. He attended East Lincoln High School and the First Baptist Church of Newton where he committed himself to full-time Christian service in 1976 and was ordained in January of 1981.

Bigham says he has prayed for a Baptist church in Denver for some time.

"I envisioned a church where the gospel would be preached without promise. I never felt that God would lead me to be a part of such a church, I was simply praying that God would bring it about using His own method."

Bigham left Denver in 1980 to begin a master's program in theology at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. While there, he says, he continued to pray for a church in Denver and progressively became more concerned about such a church. After two years of seminary work, he returned to establish that church.

"I prayed about it all through the summer months in Ft. Worth, and finally made the decision to return," he says, adding that he was unaware of a movement in the Centerview church to establish a mission in Denver.

Bigham returned, found a church building on the Campground Road just outside town, and began holding church services Aug. 22, the same day church services began at the mission. He found out later that day.

Calling his and Centerview's work a "Godly coincidence," Bigham says he soon learned both parties wanted the same thing. A short time later (September), he contacted the South Fork Baptist Association — to which both churches belong — and spoke with mission director Glain Pennell about combining the churches. Pennell, in turn, spoke with Rev. Walter Adams, the pastor of Centerview, about Bigham.

"A mission committee was formed," says Bigham, "and from late September until November (frequent) meetings were held to discuss a recommendation made by the church to call me as mission pastor."

Bigham says he anticipates bringing about 25 members of his original congregation with him when he takes over at the mission on Sunday morning. He is expecting a total attendance of 65 to 70 persons.

Bigham says he thinks the mission could be an established, separate church in a year's time. He says the congregation (including his following) "almost has outgrown our present location before even getting started."

"We're already looking at a couple of parcels of land around Denver on which to build our new church, but we've agreed to remain a mission for one year," he says.

Bigham says he's pleased with the way things have worked out for him and Centerview. He's also glad the congregation of the sponsoring church wants to remain part of the program for at least a year.

"It'll be a good experience for us as we learn how to grow as a church and how to build a new church," he says.

Centerview Baptist Church Mission is the first Baptist congregation to gather in Denver since that town's only Baptist church closed in the early 1960s.
Sunday Services Opens Denver Mission

By TERRY BRAY
T-N Staff Writer
DENVER — The Baptists are here — again.

Thirty-two persons, including members of four Denver families, attended the first service of the Center View Baptist Church mission Sunday morning, marking the first time Baptists have held church services inside the town limits in more than 20 years. Center View pastor Walter Adams delivered the morning sermon.

The mission, a special project of the 300-member Center View congregation, is located in the Lakeshore Shopping Center in the town’s business district. It began with an innocent conversation between two clergymen.

According to Rev. Adams, the idea of a new Baptist church in Denver came from a young evangelist-pastor from Anderson, S.C. Ronnie Lynch, a native of Denver now serving as pastor of the Varennes Heights Baptist Church, told Adams the town needed a new southern Baptist church, while visiting the area on a revival trip in April.

Adams took the idea back to his church. That was in May.

The church, according to Adams, decided to send out a survey team to study the need and feasibility of establishing a new church in Denver. The eight-member team, consisting of Flint Hovis, Ralph Honeycutt, Dan Laney, Donald Lawing, Wade Crouse, David and Walter Adams and Dale Gilleland, contacted residents around the community and reported back to the church’s board of deacons.

On July 18, the church voted to establish a mission making plans for the first service, which took place in Denver. A building was secured and members of the congregation began Sunday.

“Ther e are about 25 members actively participating in the mission work,” says Adams. “We have a music director, a pianist, teachers, etc.”

Because it is a project of only one church, the mission will hold services on a different schedule from Center View so as to avoid conflict. The worship hour will begin at 10 a.m. each Sunday and will be followed at 11 by the Sunday school meeting. No mid-week services are planned this time.

Hovis, chairman of the survey team, says the mission team will report back to the parent church after three months to evaluate the mission’s progress.

He’s optimistic about the future.

Center View, an affiliate of the Southern Baptist Association, was established in 1915.