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NEWS REPORTER
WHITEVILLE, N. C.

Robert Norman

JUL 23 98

Norman is new pastor at Chadbourn Baptist

By RICHARD SOLES

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Norman spent three years in the mission field in Uganda and eight more in Greece.

"As you might guess, the cultures are very different," he pointed out. "But whether I am a pastor of a church or in the mission field, my ministry is still the same; build a personal relationship with people through the Lord."

Prior to taking the pastorship at Chadbourn Baptist Church, the 43-year-old Norman was pastor at East Baptist Church of Gastonia from 1995 to 1998.

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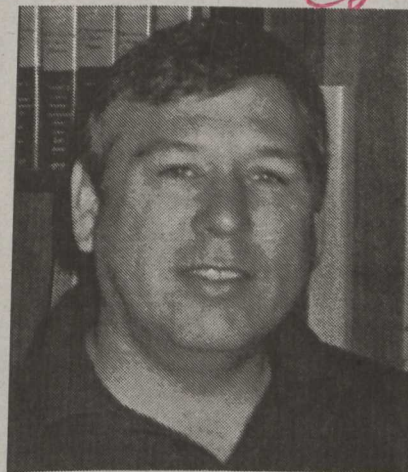
with Chadbourn is when my family and I have passed through on the way to going to the beach," Norman, a western Lincoln County native, pointed out.

So far, everything seems to be working out fine for the Normans, he said.

"At this point we've been well received and happy to be here," he explained. "This is a nice community in which the people seem laid back and no one is in a big hurry. There's something peaceful about that."

He said his ministry has stayed on the course he's always taken. "It doesn't matter about the congregation's size," he said. "To me, success is touching lives in a positive way."

Norman is a 1976 graduate of Gardner-Webb College (now



Robert Norman

university) and 1981 graduate of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest.

Norman and his wife Mickie have two sons, Matthew, 22, and Phillip, 20.

The verse, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," was written by two English sisters Ann and Jane Taylor in 1804.

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TIMES NEWS
LINCOLN, N. C.

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Normans Off To Uganda

By RANDY HAWKINS
T-N Staff Writer

When Rob and Mickie Norman and their two sons leave Lincoln County Saturday, they'll head their call as Baptist missionaries by heading to a country people have been fleeing.

"I had no idea that I would even consider Uganda," said Mickie Norman, 29, whose family will make their home there for the next four years.

"We felt strongly that the

Lord was leading us toward missions," said Rob Norman, but until last year neither had decided where they wanted to serve. Without help from each other, both selected Uganda — after first dismissing it.

Rob Norman, who was serving as pastor at First Baptist Church in Independence, Va., started by getting together three years of the Southern Baptist magazine "The Commission," each issue

highlighting a different mission field.

"I came to the one on Uganda and I said, 'Uganda. That's where Idi Amin was. I don't want to go there,'" he recalls. "So I didn't read it. I just tossed it out of the way."

"But after reading all the others, I decided to go ahead and read it. I picked it up and as I read it, the needs that were listed were so great there ... I sat there and cried."

Norman then turned the

magazines over to his wife. "I was getting ready to take about 30 young people on a camping trip and didn't think I'd have any time," Mickie Norman remembers. "So I said 'I'll take one,' and I picked up the one on Uganda."

"On the cover is a picture of a little blonde girl, a missionary child, and she's holding a black baby. It just stuck out at me ... It was just like the job description and the things they wanted was every-

thing we thought we could do."

The application process to become missionaries took about a year. If the Normans weren't certain they were being called to Uganda, they were when the clock radio awoke them on the day the Foreign Mission Board was to announce their appointment.

Although they usually just set the buzzer, Rob Norman said, "For some reason the music was on (Continued On Page 13)



Missionary Family
...Rob, Mickie, Matthew and Phillip Norman

missionary couple was going back to Uganda and requested the location.

As a result, the Normans' new home will be in Kampala, the capital city of about 350,000.

Rob Norman, 29, will serve as a church development advisor. "I'll be working with national (native) pastors and with the other missionaries to try to develop a strategy of evangelism to reach the city and to develop a strong base to reach out into the rest of the country."

His wife's role will be "what they call church in the home. It's more or less what a pastor's wife would be in the United States," she said. Her work will include teaching Ugandans to read and write and holding Bible study classes.

Rob graduated from Gardner-Webb College and the Baptist Theological Center in Wake Forest. His wife has taken two years of courses at community colleges, including some dental training that she plans to put to use in Uganda.

Mickie believes their mission will not only benefit the Ugandans, but her family as well.

cooking from her. "You said Mickie Norman. 'You can't even buy a loaf of bread anywhere. It'll be a big adjustment from fast food.'" Churches and individuals assisting the Normans

Church of Uganda having the most members. Baptists have had missions in Uganda since 1962. Many natives, however, still hold animistic beliefs.

The Normans met while in high school — he at West Lincoln, she at Lincolnton — as volunteers in a big brother-big sister program. They married in 1974.

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NEWS TIMES
CHADBOURN, N.C.

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Chadbourn's new minister

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Norman

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The Rev. Robert Norman now leads East Baptist Church in Gastonia.

Craig Bell/The Gazette

'The Long and Winding Road'

Minister leaves missionfield to lead Gastonia church

By Sally Kuhl
Gazette Lifestyle Reporter

GASTONIA — The Rev. Robert Norman still considers himself a Christian missionary although he has returned to an area where his brand of faith is the dominant religion.

The new pastor of East Baptist Church no longer dodges sniper's gunfire when he visits his church members — as he did when he lived in war-torn Uganda.

Nor does he retrace the steps the Apostle Paul walked, as he did while ministering in Greece.

But he maintains a missionary mindset. It is a way of life he hopes others will share.

"The challenge here in Gastonia is to help people open up their minds and see the needs around them and know that no matter where they are, they are missionaries," the Rev. Norman said.

The Lincolnton native, who spent 11 years as a missionary in Africa and Greece, has come home to minister. He turned an 11-month furlough from Greece into a reassignment to Gastonia. "We just began to sense the need to stay," the Rev. Norman said.

He and his wife, Mickie, also a native of Lincolnton, have moved 21 times during their 21-year marriage. He said they realized it was time to

"We felt God gave us our children before he called us to Uganda, and we felt our children were our first responsibility."

The Rev. Robert Norman,
Discussing his decision to pursue a mission outside of Africa

settle down with their two teen-age sons.

Matthew, 19, is a student at Gardner-Webb University, where the Rev. Norman taught for two semesters during the family "furlough." And Phillip, 17, is planning to attend Ashbrook High School this fall.

After 11 years of living in foreign countries, the Rev. Norman said he frequently is asked how he could deprive his children by keeping them away from the United States for so long.

He said he patiently explains that his children have been kissed by a giraffe, seen a lion kill its prey, climbed Mount Olympus and picked up ancient pottery from the sea floor while snorkeling off the shores of Greece. "I wouldn't call that a dep-

rived life."

His path to East Baptist church began one Sunday evening when the Rev. Norman preached for the congregation while its pastor had to be away.

"I've never been complimented and loved like that anywhere," he said. "The way the people at East responded, we just seemed to be drawn here from that point on."

He replaces the Rev. Robert Winecoff, who retired and now serves as the interim pastor at First Baptist Church in Belmont.

The Rev. Norman and his family are in the midst of finding a home in Gastonia and shipping their belongings overseas from Greece.

He marvels at the number of churches here in Gastonia and reflects on the new challenges faced with each new assignment.

In Africa, the Normans were among 36 missionaries living and working in Uganda from 1984 to 1987. There, survivors of the war-torn nation craved a personal relationship with God, the Rev. Norman said. Within weeks of organizing a new church, attendance at Sunday services grew to 100.

"People would knock on the gate and say, 'Please come to a Bible study

Please see FAITH/2D