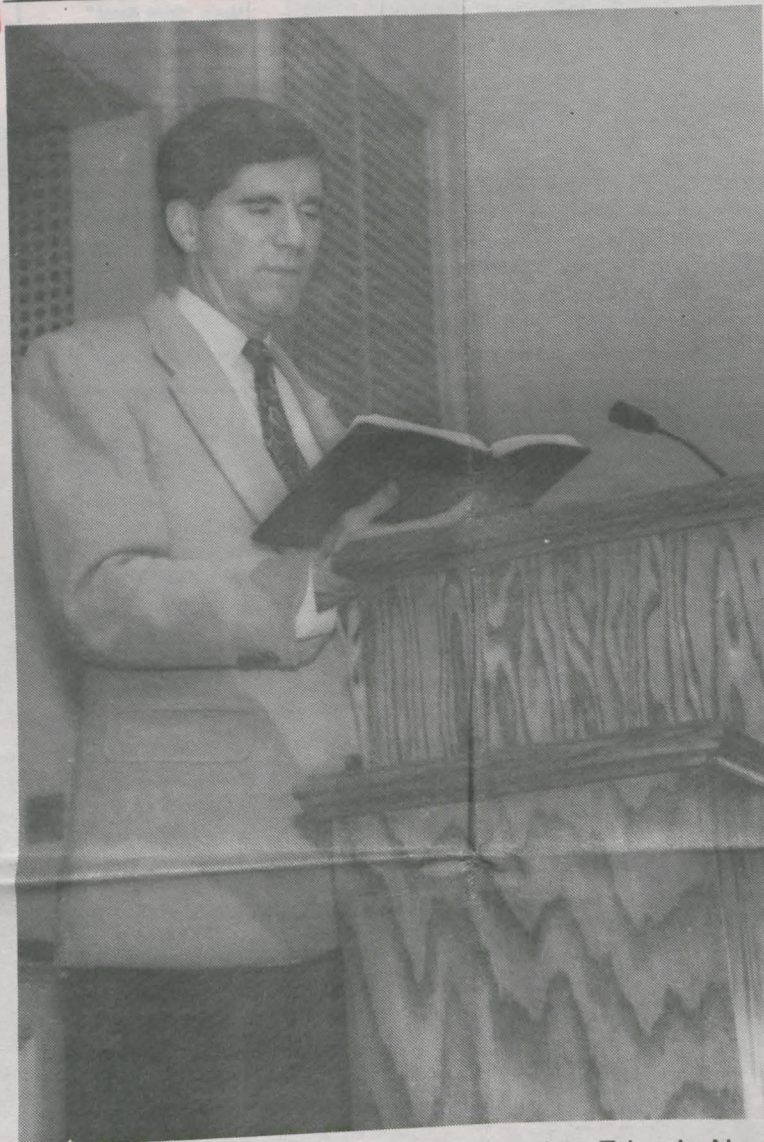


NEWS
EDEN, N.C.

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THE REV. HARRY SMITH returned to Eden in November to become pastor of First Baptist Church. It is Smith's second time as minister of the congregation. Now that he's back, he's not planning to leave soon. (Staff Photo — Powell)

Pastor Needed Little Urging To Return To Eden Church

By **MICKEY POWELL**
Staff Writer

EDEN — When the Rev. Harry C. Smith received word that the congregation of First Baptist Church wanted him as its pastor, he didn't need too much convincing to accept the job.

Although he grew up in Maryland, he calls Eden home. Before moving to Greenville, S.C., in 1988, he served as the church's pastor for nine years.

"I feel this is maybe my niche where I'm supposed to be," Smith said. "From my standpoint, I wish I had stayed."

With about 600 members, First Baptist is one of Eden's largest congregations. Smith left Eden to become pastor of White Oak Baptist Church in Greenville, a slightly more blue-collar church yet one with about twice as many members.

Believing it was God's will, he began thinking the church needed some new ideas.

"I felt like I had done all I could do here," Smith recalled. "Looking back I was probably wrong. But everyone makes mistakes."

It wasn't that he was unhappy. Greenville somehow just didn't feel like home. His wife, Joy, was supportive of his decision to come back to Eden.

Smith, 52, said the experience has probably changed him, but he's not sure how.

It has given him a realization, however: there are struggles in life to overcome. The purpose is to bring a person closer to the Lord.

"I don't believe I'm any better person," Smith said. "I just believe in the Lord more and trust in Him more."

Before obtaining his master's degree in divinity from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1977, Smith worked as a salesman of insurance and pharmaceutical

products.

He then felt a calling into the ministry, although he was a little resistant at first. Suffering from back problems, he submitted himself to what he felt was the Lord's wish for him while lying in bed one night — in pain. He said that God healed him soon afterward.

"The more I resisted, the more it became clear to me" that he was being called into the ministry, Smith said.

While obtaining his degree, Smith served as the first full-time pastor of North Fork Baptist Church in Virgilina, Va. In 1986, he received his doctorate in the ministry from Drew University.

During his 20-year ministerial career, he has led revivals across a three-state area including Virginia and South Carolina. He has also traveled to foreign lands, preaching in Chile and Germany.

In visiting other nations, especially those where Christians may not be in the majority, Smith has seen at least one noticeable difference in how religious affairs are conducted.

There seems not to be, he said, as much bickering among worshippers as occurs in some American churches. He believes those people put

aside their petty differences, simply with the delight of having other Christians to associate with.

A glance at Smith's resume shows a strong commitment he has made to community involvement.

In South Carolina, he served on the board of the North Greenville Rotary Club. But most of his involvement appears to have been in Rockingham County. He has participated in activities of the Eden Rotary Club, Eden United Way, Eden Salvation Army and Eden YMCA, among other organizations.

Still, his primary concern is serving the Lord and bringing others to be closer to Him.

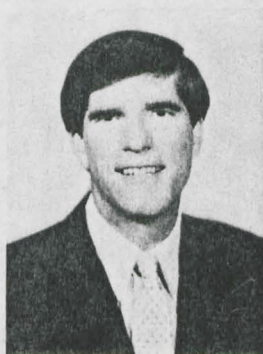
During this stay in Eden, Smith wants to help First Baptist expand its missions programs, both around the corner and around the world. While charity may begin at home, he feels it is also important to extend a helping hand as far as it will reach.

But, how long does Smith plan to remain in Eden this time around? Quite a long time, actually.

He admits if he feels the calling to leave, it will have to be a stronger calling than he heard before.

"It's my intention to stay here until I retire," the minister said. "I may stay a little longer."

God willing, that is.



HARRY C. SMITH
Pastor 1979-1988

Dr. Harry C. Smith, born in 1943, is a native of Washington, D.C. He is a graduate of High Point College with a B.A. degree, of Southeastern Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree, and of Drew University with a Doctor of Ministry. He was ordained at the Chamberlayne Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia.

His wife, Joy, is a native of High Point, North Carolina. She has been a teacher during several years of her married life. They have two sons, Jimmy and Scott.

Upon graduation from High Point College, Dr. Smith was employed by an insurance company in the Washington area for two years and by a pharmaceutical company for one year. Later he transferred to Richmond, Virginia. He became active in the Baptist Church as a teacher, Bible study leader, and deacon. He felt the call to ministry and entered Southeastern Seminary. Then in 1985, he began his study for the Doctor of Ministry.

Dr. Smith's full time ministries include the following: 1974-1978 at North Fork Baptist Church, Virgilina, Virginia; 1979-1988 at First Baptist Church, Eden, North Carolina; and 1988 began his ministry at White Oak Baptist Church, Greenville, South Carolina.



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