

Daily Free Press

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Neuse

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Degree

The Rev. Phillips L. McRae Sr. of Cheraw, S.C. has received his master of divinity degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is now the pastor of Grainger Baptist Church, Kinston Rt. 1.

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REV. PHIL
MARRAS

HOME NEWS
MARSHVILLE, N.C.

JUN - 1 95

A Big Country Church

Faulks Baptist Minister Settles Into His New Post

By Richard Belcourt

He said he walked out his door the other day and heard no factories, train whistles or cars.

"It was the first time in 20 years I could hear nothing but nature," Rev. Phil McRae of Faulks Baptist Church said.

McRae, who became minister of the church at the end of February, said he expects that to change during the next several years.

"We need to be prepared for growth," he said of his church. "With Charlotte coming down 74 (U.S. Highway 74) like a freight train, we need to be prepared."

McRae said many of the farms in the area south of Marshville and Wingate are selling out and new homes are being built.

The addition of the Monroe bypass in the next several years will add to the growth by giving the area easy interstate access to Charlotte.

An avid map reader, he said he feels Charlotte has built up on the north side and is blocked on the west side by the Catawba River, which leaves the best avenue for the city's growth to the south and east in Union County.

With an average attendance of between 250 and 300, he said the church is the largest he has pastored since taking the pulpit in 1986.

"It's the largest church I've ever served, but in many ways it's not a large church," McRae said. "It's got that family feeling."

He said he feels at home at Faulks Baptist.

"I would like to stay here a long time," McRae said. "I really love the people."

He said his parishioners go out of their way to make people feel welcome.

"It's not that easy to slide in and slide out without anyone talking to you," McRae said.

He said they see about 200 at Sunday school each week, which he credits in a large part to the families that attend.

McRae said they have a good mix of age groups which keep the church



Faulks Baptist Church's minister Rev. Phil McRae expects to see a lot more growth at the church during the next several years. McRae, a Cheraw, S.C., native came to Faulks Baptist by way of Camden, S.C.

strong, but he'd still like to see more growth.

"We got the kids, but we could use more," he said. "A good youth program can grow a church."

Faulks Baptist has property totalling 17 acres on the corner of Faulks Church Road and Camden Road.

He said the antebellum church

dates back to 1851, but he said the oldest marker in the graveyard, he has seen, dates back to 1849.

Even with the church's Sunday school building, fellowship hall, sanctuary, graveyard, pond and athletic fields, there is a lot of room for growth.

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Faulks Pastor

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McRae said two church members, Keith and Grady Smith, lease some of the acreage to grow corn.

He said the newest building, the fellowship hall, is large enough to hold services in a pinch.

One of the landmarks at the crossroads where the church is located is the set of three crosses on the rise across from the church.

McRae said many churches have three crosses up to represent Calvary, but theirs is located on bare ground at the site of an old pond dam.

"This is a rough area," he said. "It's not maintained like others in the area."

McRae feels they represent the original more closely.

He said he's not one who believes in change for change's sake, but he's not one to hold back progress either.

McRae seems very at home in front of his 386 IBM compatible computer, but he's ready to upgrade.

"It's good for sermons and letters," he said of his computer. "My

problem is I have no space on my hard drive."

McRae's wish list includes a model 486 with 66 Mhz, a fax/modem and a CD-Rom.

He came to Faulks Baptist from Northgate Colonial Baptist Church in Camden, S.C.

Before Camden, McRae ministered at Mt. Pleasant Baptist in Liberty (Randolph County) from 1988 to 1992 and Grainger Baptist in Kinston from 1986 to 1988.

He said it was the same Kinston church that Rev. John Green of Union Grove Baptist Church.

McRae said he took over Grainger Baptist from Green, and when he left, Green returned to the Kinston church.

He comes from a line of Baptist ministers he traces to his great-grandfather who preached around the turn of the century and his grandfather who ministered through the Depression era.

McRae, a self-described baby boomer, admits he didn't set out to follow his ancestors.

He said he met his wife Katherine at Winthrop College (now Winthrop University) where he was studying economics and she was majoring in piano performance.

Although McRae made quite a departure from the field of economics when he earned his master's degree in divinity from the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, his wife's move from the stage to the delivery room as an obstetrical nurse is no less remarkable.

He said he got a start toward a doctorate while living in Liberty, but it wasn't to be.

"I'm schooled out," McRae said.

His wife, now working at Union Memorial Hospital in Monroe, began her nursing education at Randolph Community College and finished at Central Carolina in Sumter, S.C.

McRae said his wife has assisted on many births, but she has actually delivered two babies.

He said one was in the parking lot of Elliott White Springs Hospital in Lancaster, S.C., and the other was when the doctor couldn't get there on time.

McRae, a Cheraw, S.C., native, said he and his wife are happy to be back in the Old North State.

"When we moved away from North Carolina, we really missed it," he said.

McRae said moving his two middle school age children, Phil, 13, and Jennifer, 12, was actually easier than waiting for the summer.

"They were exposed to the school system right off the bat," he said.

McRae said there was no time for them to worry about what it would be like at the new school.