

DAILY NEWS

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Man received calling early

By MICKEY POWELL
Staff Writer

EDEN — While growing up, the Rev. Eric T. Bunch frequently played church when spending time with his friends. Becoming a minister was a career goal he never had second thoughts about pursuing.

A lot of people in his family were ministers. They, along with people he attended church with, seemed to know Bunch would become a minister even before he did. After all, he loved to preach.

Since entering the Christian ministry when he was only 17, he has devoted practically half of his life to religious service.

"I believe every person has a purpose in life," Bunch said. "I believe I'm fulfilling God's purpose in mine." He also believes that a pastor's job is not to condemn sinners for their ways, but rather to help them accept Christ into their lives and realize that Jesus loves them and will never abandon them.

Standing in front of a congregation of about 200 people each Sunday, Bunch never feels apprehensive about preaching. He believes God supplies him with the message, placing the words in his mouth as he delivers the sermon.

"I'm never nervous when I preach. Sometimes I've worried about that," he said candidly. "Most ministers say they get nervous at times."

A native of Goldsboro, Bunch first was pastor of a church in the Morrisville community near Durham before coming to New St. Paul Baptist Church in October 1994. He was only 28 at the time.

His youthfulness, coupled with his enthusiasm for spreading God's word, seemed to attract New St. Paul's congregation to him. He was first noticed by some church members while helping conduct a wedding out-of-town. He first said no when someone inquired about his interest in changing pastorates.

Actually, Bunch had never heard of Eden — he thought the job was in Edenton, a small city near the North Carolina coast. Persistence from

those in luring him to Eden enticed him to prepare a resume, which he addressed to Edenton. Luckily for New St. Paul's members, someone picked up the letter before it was mailed.

He describes his move to Eden simply as being God's will. Since moving here, however, he has been extremely impressed with the community he never knew existed until about three years ago.

"It's a warm place to live, a place that will rally together for a great cause," Bunch said. "The town sort of comes together, I believe."

He was impressed with how the former pastor, the late Rev. R.J. Howard, laid the foundation for the church's existence. Under Bunch's leadership, the congregation has grown, outreach has been given more emphasis, and the church's ministry has become more focused.

"There's still much work to be done," he added, "but we're making steady progress."

His main goal, as stated in Ephesians, is "to equip the saints of the church" in spreading the message of Christianity. The work must start in the immediate area surrounding the East Stadium Drive church, he said, then spread throughout the community as far as the congregation can do so.

"Christianity is a ministry of both head and heart," Bunch explained. Christians are not supposed to just worship in church, but also give of their time and talents to help others. "After we preach and proclaim the gospel, we must put it into action."

New St. Paul is active in local efforts of Habitat for Humanity and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, as well as the Rowan Baptist Association, just to name a few examples. Members are also individually involved in various religious and civic activities.

Bunch likes to read theological books and listen to opera music in his spare time. He also enjoys cook-

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ing, especially spaghetti, and barbecue.

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g early to become a minister



Staff Photo, Mickey Powell

The Rev. Eric T. Bunch is pastor of New St. Paul Baptist Church in Eden. Having entered the ministry when he was only 17, he has been preaching the gospel for roughly half of his life.

ing, especially spaghetti, baked hams and barbecue.

His culinary talent was acquired from observing his mother and grandmother in the kitchen. But he quickly points out that his father and grandfather cooked, too.

It was his grandfather, in fact, who taught him that good banana pudding must have sugar and flavoring. That lesson came one day when Bunch stuck his finger in a bowl of batter, announcing afterward that it

didn't taste like good. The moment is one Bunch looks back upon fondly.

Chances are that Bunch will be at the local church a long while to come. He loves the congregation. Yet he has definite feelings that, once pastors have achieved all they feel they can within their congregations, they need to move on and allow others to contribute their unique talents.

"New St. Paul has lots of potential," he said.

Morrisville dedicates town hall

By SHERRY WILLIAMSON
Staff writer

The new, \$1.8 million Morrisville Town Hall and campus were lauded as the cornerstone for future development of the town as more than 125 people attended dedication ceremonies Tuesday.

"We're very proud...It's something we have been dreaming about for a long time," Mayor Ernest Lumley told the crowd of residents, local and area elected officials and other guests.

"It's been coming true for a long time, and today our dream came true...We feel like we've climbed the ladder from last place to among the best," he said. "This building is the cornerstone for the future development here."

Vernon Malone, chairman of the Wake County Board of Commissioners, gave the dedication address in the commissioners' meeting room. The North Carolina National Guard presented the colors, and Dale VanHorn sang the national anthem.

"You are trendsetters in this facility, to say the least," Malone said. "This colonial building represents the future of Morrisville and is the launching pad of where Morrisville will go in the future."

Malone pointed to the 70 per-

cent growth in the tax base in the last two years as an example of the town's phenomenal growth. The tax base jumped from \$181 million to \$309 million in that time period, he said.

"Congratulations to the leadership who has the foresight to move Morrisville into the next century...ensuring a bright future for the constituents of Morrisville," he said.

Malone also said he will seek help from the town commissioners, who were successful in getting a bond referendum passed in 1991 to pay for the town hall, in passing a county-wide bond referendum planned next year for public schools, Wake Technical Community College, parks and libraries.

Commissioners Leavy Barbee, Margaret Broadwell, the Rev. Floyd Enzor and Bill Ufferman made brief remarks to the crowd. Also on hand were Mayor Pro Tem Billy Sauls and former commissioner Johnny Johnson.

"It's a culmination of a long, long journey. A lot of people did a lot of work to make this a reality," said Enzor, who also gave the benediction. The Rev. Eric Bunch of Shiloh Baptist Church gave the invocation.

After remarks, town officials watched as Malone cut a ribbon

officially dedicating the 10,800-square-foot building located on 11¹/₄ acres off Morrisville-Carpenter Road. Officials then conducted tours of the building.

Construction began in March. The building was completed mid-month, and staff people moved in last week. Landscaping has not been completed yet.

Other officials attending the ceremony were Wake County commissioners Abe Jones and Jack Nichols, Cary Mayor Koka Booth and Council member Regina McLaurin, and Raleigh council members Mary Watson Nooe and Mary Cates.

Lumley read a letter from Gov.-elect Jim Hunt, who was in Poland, and could not attend the ceremony. Town officials also unveiled a recently designed town flag featuring the town seal on a white background with gold lettering.

The architect, John Sinnett of Smith-Sinnett Associates of Raleigh, said when interviewing for the job company officials promised the building would be for the people and the community.

"It would represent a foundation, a new beginning and the things that are important to Morrisville. I sincerely hope we have kept that promise," he said.



Staff photo by Allen Weed

The North Carolina National Guard presents the flags at the dedication of the Morrisville Town Hall on Tuesday afternoon. The \$1.8

million facility is located off Morrisville-Carpenter Road.

**... Seeing the future with
mi Fred, an 'expert' psychic**