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Kings Mountain People



—REV. RICHARD PLYLER

Popular minister Richard Plyler retires

After 40 years in the ministry, Rev. Richard Plyler's roots are deep in the Patterson Grove Community.

His congregation of 260 people lost their familiar preacher of 31 years when he took early retirement recently due to a health problem but they didn't lose their best friend.

"I won't be in the pulpit but my wife, Mary Elizabeth, and I will be here for them," said Plyler, who has endeared many from both inside and outside his congregation to him because of his ability to advise but most of all to listen.

He has developed a rapport that is essential to his calling of God. He calls that quality "a matter of trust."

"If people can't trust you, it's difficult to help and my Patterson Grove people and I have that trust and we have written many chapters here of service in this community."

Nearly 13 years ago the Plylers became a new home owner after 37 years of marriage. Previously they had lived in Patterson Grove at the church manse and before that

at parsonages in Wise, Va. and at Mt. Beulah Church on Dallas-Cherryville Highway. Ordained in August 1955 by Temple Baptist Church of Gastonia, Plyler and his wife moved to Kings Mountain in March 1963. They left their pastorate here on March 31, 1994.

Plyler said he had probably conducted, assisted or attended 800 funerals over the years, presided at over 150 weddings, preached numerous revivals and been on call 24 hours a day for 40 years.

His parishioners have shared the secrets of their hearts and their lives and Plyler never betrayed their confidences. He counseled people in crisis and in good times and felt it a gift that people opened up to him in trust.

Patterson Grove people have been supportive of the family over the years, allowing Plyler to return to seminary to graduate, furnishing

them with a 1970 VW Super Beetle in 1970 and sending them on trips to the Holy Land in 1976, to visit a missionary family in the Dominican Republic in 1980, and to Disney World on their 30th wedding anniversary. On their 15th wedding anniversary clockmaker Tilman Pridmore gave them a beautiful, tall walnut clock he hand carved for the living room of their home which is located on Putnam Lake Road a short distance from the church.

For 31 years Plyler said he never heard a complaint at deacon's meetings, which he said must be a record, and none of his church meetings were ever unpleasant, he said.

"This says alot about the people I have served," said Plyler, who admits there are advantages of staying in the same place a long time and also disadvantages. There are

*"I won't be in the pulpit but ...
I will be here for them."*

—Rev. Richard Plyler

monetary reasons that most preachers move on but he said the advantages of staying in the same place far outweigh them.

"Churches can't be like cookie cutters because none of us are alike and that's good," said Plyler. Each church has its own personality.

Now that he has no agenda and no schedule, Plyler expects to rise at 7 a.m. each morning and begin the day with prayer, writing and reading. He and his wife plan a trip soon to celebrate her summer vacation from Bethware School and his retirement. They still attend Patterson Grove Church where Mrs. Plyler is active in the Sunday School.

The adjustment from the pulpit to the pew isn't easy for a man who has preached all his life but Plyler says he is enjoying the visiting preachers and says his congregation has an active search committee.

Paul's Letter to the Phillipians is his favorite book because the church at Philippi was the healthiest of the New Testament churches.

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PLYLER

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Romans 12 is also a favorite passage and Plyler preached Romans 12 as the text for his first sermon as a young man just out of Gardner-Webb and Carson Newman colleges.

"I was scared to death and I had practiced and practiced in front of our pine trees for weeks and thought I had my sermon in 20 minutes," said Plyler. He preached and the sermon only lasted seven minutes, he said. So, he stated over again.

Paul's words Plyler will never forget. "I encourage you to present yourselves a living sacrifice for the betterment of the Kingdom."

On his arrival at the Kings Mountain church, Plyler said he read the minutes and church history and found to his surprise that his great-grandfather Sylvanus Head founded First Baptist Church of Gastonia and served on that Presbytery as moderator when Patterson Grove was accepted by the Kings Mountain Baptist Association in 1885.

This is the 110th year of the church which was organized November 15, 1884.

It was during his pastorate here that Plyler baptized his parents, Robert Ervin and Nelle Regis Kimbro Plyler, both of whom are buried in the church cemetery, and baptized his children.

One of the gifts the church gave him he said he would never forget. They allowed his wife to be herself, a homemaker, although Mrs. Plyler was always active in the children's department, choir, and Sunday School.

The church also allowed his three children to grow up without the pressure attached to preacher's kids, he said. His children are Richard Glenn Plyler, a band director at Burns High School, Charles Martin Plyler, who is assistant supervisor in the camera and plate making department at the Charlotte Observer; and Mary Katheryne Plyler, music consultant at Pearson Music Company in Durham. The pride and joy of the family, of course, are the two granddaughters, Lorrin, 5, and Laurel, 3 and there are pictures of the pretty girls all over the house.

Plyler said he was called to preach at the age of 20 after he became a Christian. He said he had never gone to church and it was at North Carolina State University, where he started a career in electrical engineering, that he heard the call to preach. He said he put off his decision for about 18 months but joined Temple Baptist Church in Gastonia in 1953 and gave his life to God. While a student at Gardner Webb, he was interim pastor at First Baptist Church in High Shoals and graduated from Carson Newman college where he met the love of his life, his wife, Mary Elizabeth Webb of Goodlettsville, Tn.. He served Wise Baptist Church in Virginia and Mt. Beulah in Dallas and then accepted a call to Kings Mountain.

During his pastorate here, he returned to Southeastern Seminary at Wake Forest and earned his Master of Divinity degree in 1970. Mrs. Plyler taught fourth grade at North school for 15 years and has been media specialist at Bethware School for 14 years. She returned to Winthrop University for her Master's degree.

Patterson Grove built a new sanctuary, paid for an educational building and also remodeled it, and the Plylers lived in the parsonage for 18 years.

As a trustee of Gardner-Webb University, Plyler took his first vacation in years at a retreat recently at Myrtle Beach. For the first time ever, he didn't have to punch a clock and call home for his messages.

Ministers make personal sacrifices like all people dedicated to their labors, said Plyler.

He agrees with pastors who decide to own their own homes instead of occupying church manses.

Plyler, who will be 61 in July, said he would have found himself with no equity had he decided to

live in the church manse until he formally retired.

He estimated that it takes a pastor about seven years to build a solid relationship with his church members.

But, he says, sometimes a pastor's hands are tied if the people don't like him.

Plyler said the church staff has grown over the years, along with membership and budget. A full time secretary, a full time minister of music, an organist and pianist, a ministry assistant and a custodian make up the staff.

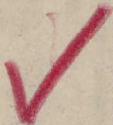
Plyler has pastored a whole generation of people who wrote him letters of appreciation that he treasures in a memory book. Kids are named after him and already he has married many of the children of longtime members in the church.

He counts his blessings every day, he says. Life has been good for the Gaston County native who found his Christian roots in a rural setting and plans to remain there in retirement.

It will be a period of adjustment from the pulpit to the pew but he thinks he can handle another challenge.

CLIP & SAVE

Elected To The Board



Rev. Richard Plyler, pastor of Patterson Grove Baptist Church, has been elected to the board of directors of Christian Service Foundation of Gardner Webb College at Bolling Springs.

Officers for the new year are Rev. E. H. Sessoms of Shelby, president; Dean Coffee of Casar, vice-president; and Mrs. Carl Ivester of Lawn-dale, secretary-treasurer.

The organization, founded to give scholarship aid to Gardner-Webb students, awarded \$4,150 in scholarship to 21 students, 10 of whom are previous recipients.

Kings Mountain: Mirror-Herald

LaGrange: Weekly Gazette

Laurinburg Exchange

Liberty News

Lillington: Harnett County News

Lincolnton: Lincoln Times-News

Littleton Observer

Louisburg: Franklin Times

Madison Messenger

Maiden News

Manteo: Coastland Times

Marion: McDowell News

Marshall: News-Record

Marshville Home

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Church Honors Plylers

Patterson Grove Baptist Church surprised Rev. Richard Plyler with an appreciation service Sunday on his 15th anniversary as pastor of the church.

Rev. Mr. Plyler began his ministry at Patterson Grove March 24, 1963.

Speakers, all members of the church congregation, were Mrs. Reba Hicks, Hugh Falls, Mrs. Jeanette Patterson, Mrs. Faye Dellinger, Steve Bolton, John Bridges and Harold Hord. Mr. Hord also sang Mr. Plyler's favorite song, "His Eye Is On The Sparrow."

The service was concluded with the presentation of a Grandfather Clock to Rev. and Mrs. Plyler and their children. The clock is seven feet tall and was designed and handcrafted from solid mahogany by a member of the church family, Tillman Pridmore.

Russell Putnam, chairman of the Fellowship of Deacons, made the presentation.



Photo By Lib Stewart

PRESENTATION — Rev. and Mrs. Richard Plyler are shown with the handsome Grandfather Clock the congregation of Patterson Grove Baptist Church presented them on appreciation day Sunday.

The Patterson Grove Church has achieved a number of accomplishments during Mr. Plyler's tenure as pastor. In 1963 the indebtedness on the educational building was retired and that same year a building fund was begun for a new sanctuary to replace the sanctuary that was built in 1889 and which was later remodeled in 1924. The new sanctuary was completed and dedicated on March 19, 1967. Total cost of the new building was over \$200,000. A 15 year loan of \$120,000 was secured for the building of the sanctuary and was retired by the congregation in seven and one half years. In 1971 a new Allen TC-1 organ was installed in the sanctuary and in 1976 a new Yamaha Grand Piano was purchased for the sanctuary. During the summer of 1973, central air-conditioning was installed in the pastorium. In 1976 the educational building was completely air-conditioned at a cost of over \$20,000 and the congregation is now completing a renovation of the educational building at a cost of over \$15,000. Patterson Grove was organized on November 15, 1884. With continued improvement the church property is now valued at over \$889,000. In 1963 the church budget was just under \$12,000 and last year the total receipts were over \$75,000. The church has 270 resident members and a Sunday School enrollment of 242 with an average attendance of 160 for Sunday School and 190 for worship. In 1976 the congregation began providing the annual salary support of \$5,200 for a foreign missionary couple, Rev. and Mrs. Ronald B. Wilson, who serve in the Dominican Republic. During this year total gifts for missions and mission projects will near the \$20,000 mark. Four years ago the church began a 10 week summer program of activities under the direction of a full-time staff member. In 1965 the church ordained a son of the church, Charles W. "Buddy" Freeman, into the ministry. Rev. Freeman serves as college minister for Gardner-Webb College. In 1969 another son of the church was ordained, H. Leon "Buddy" Wright, Jr., who serves as pastor of Wise Baptist Church, Wise, Virginia. Presently there are two other young men in the church family who are preparing for the ministry, John Bridges, completing his first year at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, and Steve Bolton who will graduate from Gardner-Webb College in May and will enter Southeastern in the fall. Concerning the accomplishments of the church family, Mr. Plyler remarked, "During my 15 years as pastor I have witnessed many accomplishments by the Patterson Grove Church Family. They are too

numerous to mention them all, but one of the most significant accomplishments achieved by the church is that I have seen them move from being a church congregation to being a church family and there is a vast difference between the two."

Sunday was not the first time the congregation expressed their appreciation for Mr. Plyler. In 1973 the church had an appreciation day for the pastor to honor his service to the church family and also to honor his 40th birthday. For Christmas, 1974, the church family gave the pastor a new automobile. In 1976 an anonymous gift of \$2,000 was given to the church for Mr. and Mrs. Plyler to take a two week trip to the Holy Land. The church added almost a \$1,000 to that for travel expenses. On April 3 of last year the congregation held an appreciation day in honor of the pastor with a special service, dinner on the church grounds and a love gift of over \$1,200. Of these actions and of the service this past Sunday, Rev. Plyler says, "Our church family has expressed in unique ways their appreciation for my ministry and the work I try to accomplish. I wish every pastor could have the experience of being affirmed as I have. It would make a difference in their approach to ministry as it has mine. Every church has the opportunity to grow and develop their pastor into becoming a better person, a better Christian and a better minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, many churches miss that opportunity. I shall always be grateful to the Patterson Grove Church Family for making it possible for me to grow and develop as a person, as a Christian and as a minister. I will always be grateful for the affirmation they have given me."

Mrs. Plyler is the former Mary Elizabeth Webb, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Webb of Gocilletsville, Tennessee. She is completing her 13th year as a teacher at North Elementary School. Rev. and Mrs. Plyler have three children: Richard Glenn, a sophomore and music-education major at Mars Hill College; Charles Martin, an 11th grader, and Mary Katherine, a 10th grader at KMSHS.

Rev. Plyler attended Gardner-Webb College and graduated from Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tennessee with A. B. Degree, and has the Master of Divinity

Degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is the son of Mrs. Nell Plyler of Gastonia and the late Robert E. Plyler. Rev. Plyler has served as president of the Christian Service Organization of Gardner-Webb College and presently serves as Vice-chairman of the Board of Directors. He is chairman of a 28 member building committee for a new office center for the Kings Mountain Baptist Association. He is a

member of the General Board of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and serves as First Vice-President of the Council on Christian Social Services of the General Board. Rev. Plyler is also a special pastoral consultant for the Pastoral Ministries Section of the Baptist Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and holds workshops for pastors on an associational level across the convention.

Graham: Alamance News
Granite Falls Press
Greensboro: Carolina Peacemaker
Grifton Times
Hamlet News
Havelock Progress
Hertford: Perquimans Weekly
Hickory News
Highlands: Highlander
Hillsborough: News of Orange Co.
Jonesville: Yadkin Enterprise

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REV. AND MRS. RICHARD PLYLER

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Being Pastor More Than Preaching

By JUNE BALLARD
Herald Correspondent

"You don't become someone's pastor until they allow you to. In ministering to people in what I call the circle of crisis and hope, you don't step into this circle unless they let you." These are the words of Rev. Richard Plyler, pastor of Patterson Grove Baptist Church in Kings Mountain for 25 years. Simple words of wisdom gleaned from 31 years of dedicated service to God and his fellow human beings.

At 20 years of age, while a student at N.C. State, Plyler became a Christian and about three weeks later felt the call to the ministry. "Other than two funerals, I had not been in church in my entire life," said Rev. Plyler. "When I walked into the church wherein I was saved, it was a whole new world." After his lifechanging experience, he began to read devotional and doctrinal material in an effort to choose the path that he must travel.

His call to the ministry came one day while he was walking across the campus. "It hit me like a ton of bricks," said Rev. Plyler. "I didn't hear an audible voice but I just stopped and it was if He were saying to me -- I want you to preach."

Being a new Christian, his pilgrimage was still uncertain. Uncertainty prompted him to withdraw from college and return home. A time of secular employment followed. Included at this time was a job at a supermarket in Gastonia and working in

the laboratory at Groves Thread. During this time, he attended Belmont Abbey College in Belmont for a semester of study.

Religious books became prime reading material. Books entitled: "Why I am a Methodist," "Why I am a Presbyterian," "Why I am a Catholic" and others. After about a year and a half, he began reading, "Why I am a Baptist", written by Pastor Louie Newton. Rev. Newton passed away two summers ago at the age of 94 or 95.

"I knew there were several things I wanted," said Rev. Plyler. "I wanted a Bible, which I got, and I wanted to be immersed when I was Baptized." Realizing his need for church membership, and being aware of his lack of knowledge of church doctrine, he decided to become a Baptist, be immersed and enjoy the freedom of belief offered by the Baptist Church.

January of 1954 found Rev. Plyler studying at Gardner Webb College. This continued for three semesters and was followed by a time of study at Carson-Newman Baptist College in Jefferson City, Tennessee. Here he met Mary Elizabeth Webb while in their senior year. Their first date was on October 5, 1956 and one year later, on October 5, 1957, they were married.

In July of 1957, the Plylers reported to their first pastorate. The western mountains of Virginia in the small town of Wise situated deep in coal mining country became their first pastorage. While there

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Being A Pastor Is More Than Preaching For Rev. Richard Plyler

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their first child was born.

After 1½ years there, a call was received to serve at Mt. Beulah Baptist Church on the Dallas Cherryville Highway. This call was answered and a subsequent ministry there was undertaken. While at Mt. Beulah, Rev. Plyler attended Southeastern Seminary one semester.

And then one day the inevitable call came. One Thursday evening a man called and asked if he would consider a move. Rev. Plyler advised him that he was very happy at Mt. Beulah and had no reason to consider a move. However, he advised that he would not close the door on anything the Lord had in store. The man didn't say who he was nor which church was interested, but promised to see him on Sunday.

That Sunday morning's service at Mt. Beulah counted 27 visitors--3 pulpit committees. "Everyone was wondering what was going on here," said Rev. Plyler. After the service, all 3 committees wanted to talk to Rev. Plyler. Polkville Church and Union Church were the first two and Patterson Grove was last. The Patterson Grove committee consisted of Jesse Burton, J.W. Rayfield, Melvin Wright, Tillman Pridmore, and Herman Wright. What happened next can best be stated in Rev. Plyler's own words: "I walked into this small Sunday School room and as soon as I walked in I knew beyond a shadow of doubt that we were going to Patterson Grove Baptist Church. I've never had anything like this happen before or since. After meeting Mary Elizabeth and walking

them to their car, I told her to start packing--We're going to Patterson Grove." She said, 'Are you crazy?' I said, I may be, but we're going to Patterson Grove.

Prayer preceded them. They prayed that the Lord would leave them at Patterson Grove for 10 years; they prayed that the people would love them; they prayed that any negatives that were there would not come up again.

Mary Elizabeth didn't hang any pictures for 11 years. They both did not rule out having to move again. Then on Rev. Plyler's 40th birthday, the church had its first pastor appreciation day. A special bulletin was printed, a surprise program, a gift of about \$1,500, and pounding was all a part of this special day. At 40 years of age, he had just completed 11 years of service at Patterson Grove. Forty red roses on the Lord's table commemorated his 40th birthday. After this, Mary Elizabeth began hanging pictures.

A grandfather clock was given the Plylers on their 15th anniversary with Patterson Grove. Tillman Pridmore made the clock from walnut wood which came from his property. Mary Elizabeth refers to this as a cherished possession.

The people of Patterson Grove Baptist Church have afforded Rev. and Mrs. Plyler not only a place of service and ministry, but has also provided them a home and for their children, a homeplace.

Mary Katherine, their youngest child, was nine months old when they first came to Patterson Grove. She is now 26. Charles Martin, their middle

son, will be 28 in November. Richard Glenn, their oldest son, recently celebrated his 30th birthday.

"A lot of ministers' children never have a place to call home," said Rev. Plyler. "They live wherever their parents may be and have no traditional home place. My children have a home."

Rev. Plyler baptized his mother and father, and Richard Glenn at Patterson Grove. Both his mother and father are buried in the Patterson Grove cemetery.

The church parsonage was the Plyler's home for 18 years. A land donation and a housing allowance made possible the building of the Plylers' dream home...a place to retire to someday. "Many ministers come to retirement and have no place to go," said Rev. Plyler.

At the age of 34, when Rev. Plyler had been with Patterson Grove for 6 years, he returned to Southeastern Seminary. It was quite difficult, especially having small children and being pastor of a church. However, he graduated with a Master's Degree in May, 1970.

Since that day in March of 1963 when Patterson Grove welcomed the Plylers, many positive things have happened in the life of the church and in the lives of the Plylers.

The weekly newsletter was started and is in its 17th year.

A personal prayer slip program has been in operation for 20 years.

A mission advance fund has been utilized...supporting a missionary assistant.

The church has sent four young men into the ministry.

A new sanctuary has been built -- now 21½ years old.

All three of Richard and Mary Elizabeth Plyler's children graduated from Kings Mountain Senior High School.

Richard Glenn graduated in 1976 and then majored in music at Mars Hill. He is currently beginning his 5th year as band director at Burns Senior and Junior High Schools. His wife, the former Karen English from Asheville, is Associate Band Director at Crest Senior and Junior High Schools. They reside in Shelby.

Charles Martin attended Lees McRae and Gaston College. He and his wife, the former Lori Thrift, work at Triple D Publishers in Shelby, where he is a Photo Graphics Technician and she is the Editorial Assistant and receptionist. They live in Kings Mountain.

Mary Katherine graduated from Wingate College in 1984 with a Music Business Degree. She is employed at Pearson Music Company in Durham as a Customer Relations Consultant. Her home is in Durham.

The longest tenured pastor in the Kings Mountain Baptist Association, Rev. Plyler attributes his successful years to the gracious goodness of the Lord.

His philosophy is simple--"we're all in this together as human beings. We all need God and each other. If we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, He'll show us what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and will provide the means for it to be done."

Don Gibson Got Start

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REV. AND MRS. RICHARD E. PLYLER

Patterson Grove Baptists honor Rev., Mrs. Plyler for long service

Rev. and Mrs. Richard E. Plyler were honored for their 31 years of service to Patterson Grove Baptist Church at a July 30 reception hosted by the church family.

Over 150 guests attended from 2-4 p.m.

The Plylers were presented with a love offering by members of the church and other friends. The Activities Committee of the church chaired by Mrs. Mona Scism was responsible for hosting the event at the direction of the Fellowship of Deacons.

Among the guests present for the occasion were the Plylers' three children, daughter-in-law and grandchildren: Richard Glenn and Karen Plyler and their daughter, Laurel, of Shelby; Charles Martin Plyler and his daughter, Lorrin of Kings Mountain and Mary Katheryne Plyler of Durham.

Surprise guests were Mrs. Plyler's mother, Avis Webb, her sister and brother-in-law, Barbara and Billy Harris, all of Goodlettsville, Tn.; and two brothers, John Webb of Kingsport, Tn.; and Rev. Milton Webb of Johnson City, Tn.

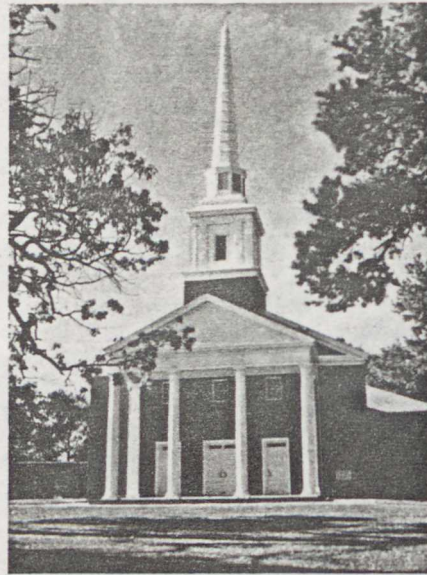
BRIEF HISTORY OF Patterson Grove Baptist Church Kings Mountain, North Carolina

On November 15, 1884, a Presbytery was formed with the Rev. G.M. Webb as chairman. There were 72 letters presented. "On motion," reads the minutes, "the church was constituted on the principles of the Holy Bible with name Patterson Grove."

The next day, Sunday, November 16, 1884, a Sunday School meeting was conducted and at 11 o'clock Rev. Webb preached the sermon of dedication from 2 Chron. 2:18, "And he (Solomon)...set the people a work."

On January 3, 1885, Rev. P.R. Elam became the first pastor and preached that day his first sermon from Psalm 116:12: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

During 1885 Rufus and Sarah Patterson and G.J. and Eli B. Patterson deeded to the church over four acres of land. Then, on September 24, 1885, the church was received as a member of the Kings Mountain Baptist Association.



By 1900 there were 188 members. Total receipts for the year was \$83.00 and the value of the church property was \$600. Today, total membership is 321 with total receipts during this past year of over \$91,000.00 of which \$35,174.17 went for world missions causes.

In 1922, the original building was remodeled. On November 1, 1954, the church voted to go fulltime (preaching every Sunday). On August 28, 1955, ground was broken to erect a new educational building and on March 27, 1966, ground was broken for a new sanctuary. The replacement value of all church property today is over \$850,000.00.

Patterson Grove has had 22 pastors since 1885. The present pastor, Rev. Richard Plyler, has served since March 24, 1963.

Patterson Grove also supports Rev. and Mrs. Ronald B. Wilson, missionaries to the Dominican Republic.

