

J. William Giles
41 Hampshire Lane
Pinehurst, NC. 28374

Dear Union Church Family

Sally and I extend to you our warmest congratulations on the 200th anniversary of the church's founding. For 200 years Union has stood at Union crossroads offering its mighty witness to all who pass by.

We are privileged to have been a part of that witness and harbor many wonderful memories of our years there. You took this "city boy," introduced him to rural life and molded him into a pastor. Our years at Union have been for me professionally, the basis upon which I have conducted my ministry. You taught me well.

I still remember my first Sunday in your pulpit in December of 1957. The seminary had sent me out to preach. When I returned to the campus the next day our placement officer was waiting to tell me that "Union wants you to come back and preach for them again and meet with their search committee." I did and you extended a call and that was the beginning of our relationship.

The terms of that Call were: Salary \$4,800.00, Pension \$480.00, Manse (we paid utilities) and a 10 party line telephone (rings; 2 longs and a short). We started on the weekends beginning in March of 1958 and moved to Union early in June of that year.

We have many memories upon which we continue to lean. Our three boys were born there. They used to run and play in the cemetery until one Memorial Day they had collected and brought home arms full of flags they had discovered there. It was quite a chore to return them to the proper graves.

One of my first projects was to organize the Union Church basketball team and join the Solanco Church League. I must admit that we weren't very good and didn't win many games, but we had a lot of fun and did win a few. On more than a few occasions I conducted Wednesday evening prayer meetings with my uniform under my suit and then raced off to play in a game. I spent most Monday mornings riding with Pete Eckert who insisted that I needed to experience Southern Lancaster County on horseback.

Pastoral visits were frequently made in the barns at milking time. Somehow Sally always knew when I had been in the barns. Then there were the times when a storm would knock the church clocks out of sync and the loud speakers in the church tower would go off about 4:00 in the morning instead of the afternoon. More than a few farmers milked their cows at the crack of dawn to hymns floating across the fields.

You have recently installed a new floor in the church building. I remember being a part of the crew that installed the old sub flooring and John Herr insisting we had to place a nail in it every four or five inches in every direction.

Professionally, Union was a series of firsts for me: My first sermon, first church, first wedding, first baptism, first communion service, first session and congregational meetings, first corn roast, first funeral, first Mother's Day service (when I began a series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer with the title Our Father) and each was its own unique event accompanied by a sad or humorous story, and each of which I still remember in considerable detail (especially the Mother's Day service). Most of those "firsts" has been replicated many times over and having experienced each at Union taught me and has served me well over the years.

I cannot conclude this letter without a tribute to Union's covered dish suppers and the Union cooks. During my ministry I have attended more "suppers" and banquets than I can count. I have to say however, that while many of them were very good, none can match the Union Church ladies and their cooking. I gained more than a few pounds as your pastor. I still recall Jane Ferguson telling me following one covered dish supper: "Bill, you are a cook's dream." I must also add that Sally continues to make generous use of her Union Church cookbooks.

There is so much more I could write. This letter has brought back so many happy memories for us. We conclude by assuring you that Union Church will always hold a very special place in our hearts and that both of us are grateful for Union Church starting us in ministry and contributing so much to experiencing and understanding congregational life. We are indebted to you and thankful for our years at Union.

Our prayer is that God will grant Union Church many more years of faithful and fruitful ministry at the Union crossroads and beyond.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally & Bill". The script is cursive and fluid, with the ampersand being particularly stylized.

Sally and Bill Giles