

## IX. Some Things Old, Some Things New

By Kit Watts

Ned Ashton scarcely could be persuaded to speak in his own church, perhaps only once or twice a year.

Taylor Bunch, on the other hand, accepted the pastorate on the condition that he would preach most of the time.

The interim between Ashton and Bunch was filled by Merle Mills,<sup>56</sup> former Washington Missionary College student and pastor from Battle Creek. Though Mills stayed less than a year, one of his innovations is still a quarterly occurrence. He was the first to organize Sligo's large congregation for communion service during the worship hour. Previously it had been considered impossible and the afternoon service offered was poorly attended.<sup>57</sup>

Autumn Council and the Bible Conference met in Sligo Church in the early fall of 1952. (Another Bible conference did not meet until the summer of 1974).

Taylor Bunch began his ministry during the college Week of Prayer in October 1952. He was a scholar and writer and carried a manuscript into the pulpit. He had already authored a number of books including Behold the Man and The Seven Epistles of Christ.<sup>58</sup>

He is particularly remembered for a series of sermons on the twelve tribes of Israel. It was his belief that each person was a member of one of the tribes by virtue of characteristics held in common. For those who didn't tune in to him as a pastor, he would say comfortingly that maybe the next pastor would be a member of their tribe!

His serious demeanor in the pulpit was seldom ruffled. But he once inadvertently made a spoonerism which brought the entire congregation down in laughter. His tongue slip-which still rouses a chuckle – put Jonah in the "bell's whaley."<sup>59</sup>

J. Melvyn Clemons was Sligo's first associate minister. He came in 1952.<sup>60</sup>

That same year Takoma Academy moved out of the basement of Columbia Hall and into a new plant on Carroll Avenue. Secondary level classes had been held on the campus almost since the college was founded but a separate identity emerged slowly. In 1933 the academy took its name. Among those who served as principals were Ellsworth Andross, Floyd Rittenhouse and Conrad Rees. "Prof" (J.P.) Laurence became principal in 1947.<sup>61</sup>

A signal event of 1953 was the installation of a \$24,000 Mohler pipe organ and the service of celebration on April 4.<sup>62</sup> During a board meeting in March 1951 the consensus was that the world would not last long enough to merit installing the larger organ. By summer, however, sentiment favoring the pipe organ swelled and a vigorous fund-raising campaign was launched. An electric organ had been used since 1945.

In 1953 Curtis Quackenbush joined the staff, merging pastoral duties with treasurer's work and relieving Mary D. Patterson who had served as treasurer on a volunteer basis for many years.

In November 1953, W. H. Branson, then General Conference president, spoke for opening services at the new Takoma Park Church.<sup>63</sup>

The fifties were years of anniversaries and steady growth for Adventist institutions and the city of Takoma Park.

The sanitarium addition was built at a cost of \$1.3 million. A major addition to the General Conference was completed in 1953. Bliss Electrical School, on the site of Benjamin Gilbert's North Takoma Hotel, sold out to Montgomery County for a new junior college.<sup>64</sup>

In 1954 the governor of Maryland, Theodore R. McKeldin, spoke in Sligo Church on a Sunday afternoon in October, commemorating the college's fiftieth anniversary.<sup>65</sup> In 1957 the new post office on Maple Avenue opened, WGTS began to broadcast in FM, and the sanitarium celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.<sup>66</sup> In 1958 the Review and Herald completed a new addition which modernized its face on Eastern Avenue.

A footnote on history is that the site where Sligo School now stands was first chosen in 1957 as the campus for Potomac University.<sup>67</sup>

The seminary came to Takoma Park in 1937 and moved into its own quarters behind the General Conference in 1941. The seminary and a school of graduate studies were formed under one name in 1957<sup>68</sup>--but a year later Emmanuel Missionary College received the nod to graft in the Adventist University<sup>69</sup> finally named after J. N. Andrews, missionary to Switzerland.

A year before Bunch concluded his Sligo ministry he initiated a move that was to influence the church over the next thirteen years--he invited a young minister from Spokane, Washington, to join the pastoral staff, a William Loveless.<sup>70</sup>

Footnotes:

56. "Harding and Mills Are Speakers for the Week-end," Sligonian, May 29, 1952.
57. Interview with Florence Dorn.
58. "Taylor G. Bunch to Sligo in Time For Fall Week of Prayer," Sligonian, October 29, 1952.
59. Interview with Neil Tilkens.
60. "Elder Clemons Plans Week of Prayer," Sligonian, February 25, 1953.
61. Interview with J. P. Laurence.
62. Sligonian, April 18, 1953.
63. Sligonian, November 6, 1953.
64. Takoma Park, P. 24.
65. Sligonian, October 8, 1954.
66. Sligonian, April 26, 1957.
67. Sligonian, November 1, 1957.
68. The SDA Encyclopedia, p.
69. Sligonian, November 7, 1958.
70. Sligonian, March 24, 1961.