

ALL AGES, INTERESTS SERVED BY LIBRARY

By

SUSAN C. HIGGINS¹

Believing that the church library should be the educational resource center of the church, the First Presbyterian Church of downtown Charlotte decided during its remodeling program in the early 1950's to provide an attractive room in a key location for a fine collection of books to supplement its teaching program as well as to provide carefully selected books in many fields. One of the dedicated ladies of the church gave the money necessary for renovating an area for the library in memory of her parents.

By 1952 the room, though small, was ready for use with light green walls and shelves, carpet, a big table, and some chairs. Two professionally trained librarians willingly and enthusiastically set about to organize, classify, and catalog books which were already available in a small library in the basement and various classrooms of the church. The books were classified by the Dewey Decimal Classification System, the same system as that used in the local public library and school libraries, but the numbers were kept simple.

For each book in the library there is an author, title, and, in many cases, one or two subject cards. These cards are filed together and arranged in alphabetical order. Some of the cards are ordered already printed from the H. W. Wilson Company, but others are typed by volunteer helpers in the library or at home. The younger users of the library consult the catalog frequently, but many of the older ones come in and ask if a certain book is in or they find a book by noticing the shelf labels or special exhibits.

The shelves are labeled with such headings as: Bible Study, Meditations, Christian Ethics, "How to Raise Your Children", For the Teen-ager, Game and Party Books, Religious Non-Fiction, etc. Reading interest is highest for books related directly to the church program of study, current religious, theological, and inspirational publications for adults, "how to raise your children" books for the young parents, and children's books.

An annual budget of \$150 (only \$50 in 1950) is supplemented by gifts from individuals and organizations. Books are purchased throughout the year. Selection of books for the library is done mostly by the Director of Christian Education, a member of the adult council, and a co-librarian who select to meet the needs of the church school curriculum and other needs for the spiritual growth of its members. Choice of books is based upon need, demand, and value. Teachers, children, and adults know their suggestions for new books are welcomed. Cards are available in the library for persons to offer suggestions for new acquisitions. As new books are added to the library, notices appear in the church bulletin.

Giving memorials has proven a grand way of adding needed volumes to the library. Approximately 20 percent of our books each year come as memorials. A special display is prepared for memorial books saying "In memory of _____". A book plate is pasted in the front of each book giving the name of the person memorialized and the

¹ Mrs. Higgins is co-librarian of First Presbyterian Church, Charlotte. She was formerly employed as a member of the library staff at Queens College in Charlotte as well as Winthrop Training School, Rock Hill, S. C.

donor. A listing of some or all of the books appear in the church bulletin. Some books are given "In honor of _____" and are similarly treated.

The library keeps a list of "Books Wanted" so that when a person decides to donate a book a suggestion for a good book can be offered immediately. It is preferred that the donor give the money and let the books be purchased by the library because the Presbyterian Bookstore in the next block allows a 20 percent discount to church libraries.

Not all books donated to the library are added to the collection. The Christian Education Committee decides which books to accept and which to reject.

Volunteer helpers from the various divisions of the church have given endlessly of their time, ability, and zest to make the library mean something to the whole congregation. Once when a certain lady was asked to be a regular worker in the library on Sunday mornings, she replied, "Oh, I couldn't! I don't know *a thing* about numbers on books." The Director of Christian Education replied, "I am asking you to help because you know more people than anyone else. You'll gradually learn the books in the library and you can bring the two together." She finally agreed to help, and her aid was invaluable.

The library felt a lull in use when the new office and education building was built in 1961 because it was not as centrally located as before. However, with the books and periodicals still attractively displayed, many with plastic covers, the library is still a magnetic center to those who pass its *open* door.

A large bulletin board just outside the library serves as a further drawing card, featuring forthcoming church events, special days, seasons, and interests. Boy Scouts and others in the church have planned and arranged attractive bulletin boards in the library and in other areas to point to the library.

Rules for the library are plain and simple, thus making it *easy* for people to read. The rules are prominently posted in the library. If a reader comes in when no one is on duty he checks out the books he chooses for himself by following the simple check-out rules.

Because of limited space and lack of personnel on duty at all times, the audio-visual aids are handled by the Director of Christian Education. She is an avid user of the library, and when a need arises for audio-visual aids she recommends certain books to go along with the study.

At present the library is serviced mostly by the two co-librarians who work before and after Sunday School and after the worship hour. One librarian works during the Sunday School hour also, and the trained librarian works on Thursdays from 10 a. m. to 2 p. m., when it is convenient, to catalog books and help those who come for meetings on that day.

Plans for the future include appointing a library committee. The co-librarians will be co-chairmen of the committee and will be responsible to the Christian Education Committee of the Session. Other members of the committee will represent major organizations of the church and be chosen because of a genuine interest in the library and an appreciation of the values that a library has in the church's educational ministry. A reading junior will be a committee member because children can keep a library staff "on its toes" and stir up much interest among associates. Members of the committee may change at the

end of each church school year, but it is hoped that most of them will serve for a longer period of time. Ex-officio members will be the minister, Director of Christian Education, and superintendent of the church school.

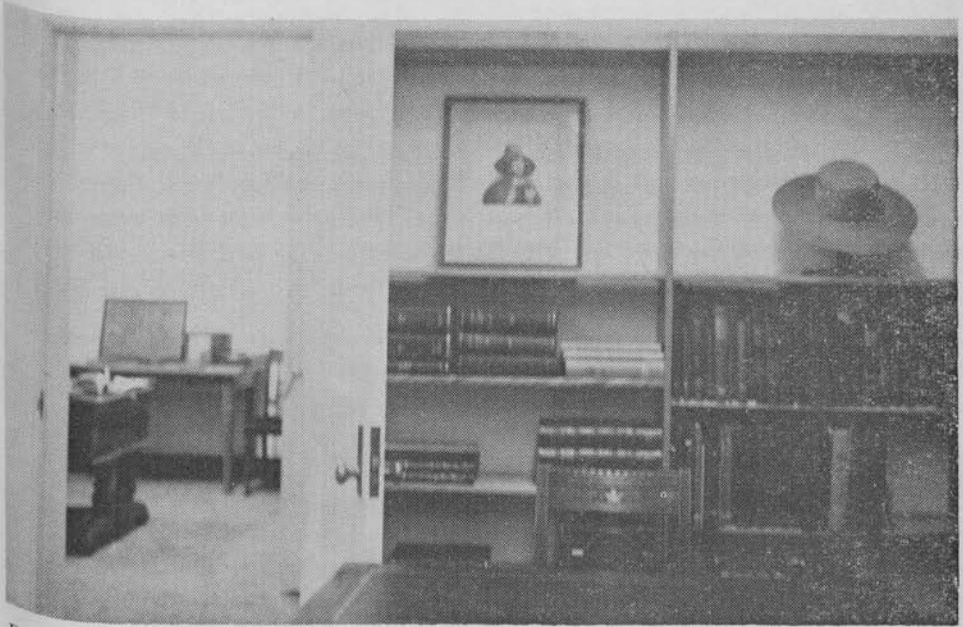
The library is making a contribution to church library growth and interest in nearby areas. A clinic for church librarians in the Mecklenburg Presbytery was held in our church about two years ago for the exchange of ideas and experiences.

Other librarians in the area come to our library for help in classifying books and have asked us to visit them when they were starting libraries. Our chief advice to them in establishing a library is to have the whole church at heart and to choose a key location so that as people pass they will be motivated to *stop, look, and read*.

A QUAKER LIBRARY

By

HERBERT POOLE¹



Part of the genealogy collection in the outer room of the Quaker Collection is shown above. Picture at left is of George Cox, founder of the Society of Friends. The hat belonged to Nathan Hunt, founder of New Garden Boarding School.

Of all special collections in libraries on church-related college campuses throughout North Carolina, and indeed throughout the entire South, the Quaker Collection in the Guilford College Campus Library at Greensboro is probably unique.

1. Mr. Poole is director of libraries at Guilford College, Greensboro.