



IN 1951, Barbara was only 17 when she married her sweetheart, Nolan Pierce. They have served as co-pastors of the United Church of Oberlin since Dec. 1, 1998, and also serve the Immanuel United Church of Christ at Herndon.

Couple says goodbye to churches

By MARY LOU OLSON

Though Barbara and Nolan Pierce, co-pastors of the United Church of Oberlin, had their first date on July 2, 1950, he says it took 18 months to get her to marry him.

The couple plans to retire this month, and their last services in Oberlin and Herndon, where they serve the Immanuel United Church of Christ, will be on Sunday, Sept. 26.

Mrs. Pierce said she was active in the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Anadarko, Okla., and her husband had a varied church background when they met. One of the first things he told her, she recalls, was that he planned to become a pastor.

Since Mrs. Pierce was only 17 when they were married, she always says, "He put me through high school, and I put him through college."

After they were married on Dec. 22, 1951, he continued to farm with his parents, who were not ready to retire. After they sold the farm on Dec. 22, 1954, Nolan began studies for the ministry at Phillips University in Enid, Okla., in January 1955.

Early in September 1957, he tried out for a student pastorate at Avard, Okla., but the next day, which was enrollment day for the fall semester, he came down with the mumps and missed the first two weeks of classes. With the deaths of both their fathers that October, he missed the first seven weeks of school and was not able to accept the call at Avard.

She was assistant registrar at Phillips for four years, then became secretary to the president of the university. They had a son, Larry, who was 19 months old when they both became involved in the high school education at Phillips, a Christian Church college. They had two more children, Bonnie, in April 1956, and Harvey, in August 1958.

Mr. Pierce completed his undergraduate degree in May 1959 and began studies at Phillips Graduate Seminary. He started a student pastorate at Braman, Okla., in February 1958. He received his graduate degree in May 1962, and was ordained to the Christian ministry at their home church in Anadarko, Okla., on May 6, 1962.

He began his first fulltime ministry June 1, 1962, at the First Christian Church in Berryville, Ark. They moved to a new parsonage there, leaving student housing behind, and he said he especially enjoyed working with the youth during the five years they were there.

"A special memory at the First Christian Church at Berryville," he said, "is when I baptized six youths, which included three sets of brothers and sisters."

The family then moved to Russellville, Ark., where Mrs. Pierce began her college work at Arkansas State University.

She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in May 1971 and began a teaching career that fall in Russellville. She continued to teach as they changed locations in his ministry.

On June 1, 1972, he became pastor of the First Christian Church in Slaton, Texas, near Lubbock. They became foster parents of a teen-age girl, Anna Birdwell. She lived with them until they moved to Broken Bow, Neb., in January 1974.

"The church in Broken Bow had been considering a new building for 15 years and during our time there, it became a reality," he said.

Their next move was to Minden, Neb., on Aug. 1, 1979.

In 1984, the elementary school in Naponee, Neb., closed and when Mrs. Pierce did not find another teaching job, her husband suggested it was time for her to go to seminary, so she enrolled at Phillips in Janu-

ary 1985.

He continued serving the Minden church, but after she had completed three semesters, he moved to the Garber Christian Church in Garber, Okla., only 17 miles from the seminary campus.

She began a student pastorate in September 1987 and continued that until September 1991, when they became co-pastors at the First Christian Church in Hobart, Okla. Mrs. Pierce received a Master of Divinity degree in April 1989 and was ordained on May 7, 1989.

They served the church at Hobart for more than seven years before

becoming co-pastors of the United Church of Oberlin on Dec. 1, 1998. They also served the First Christian Church in McCook until it closed on Dec. 1, 2002. Since that time, they have been serving the Immanuel United Church of Christ of Herndon.

Both said they are looking forward to their retirement in Cozad, Neb., where they have a home and their younger son, Harvey, and his family live.

"We'll be able to get in on our grandchildren's school activities and it will be nice to be close to family again," they said.



SITTING PROUDLY on the fender of his 1947 Fleetline Chevy is Nolan Pierce, who owned the car when he and his wife were married.



NOLAN AND BARBARA PIERCE (above) will be retiring this month after serving churches in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Nebraska and Kansas. Mrs. Pierce (below) is shown at age 17.

