

## The Organizing Drive

On July 18, 1977, Rev. Dr. William McCorkle was visiting Leon Gabriel at his home in Cary, NC. Gabriel was new to Cary and had been visiting Presbyterian churches in the area. One of the churches he had visited was West Raleigh Presbyterian, where McCorkle was an interim pastor. After Gabriel expressed mild frustration in finding a church that he felt was right for him, McCorkle told Gabriel that he should consider becoming more involved in church leadership. Gabriel was a Presbyterian Elder, having been installed at his former church in Mooresville, NC. His first response to McCorkle was to suggest that there certainly must be some long-time residents of Cary who were more qualified to lead in their churches, although he intended to become active in whichever church he joined. McCorkle then explained that this leadership need not be in an existing church. Rather, the leadership could be in establishing a new Presbyterian church in the Cary/Apex area. From as early as 1972, the Presbytery of Orange recognized that this part of Orange Presbytery was rapidly growing and had, in fact, appointed a committee to study the need for a new church. By 1977, the Cary/Apex population had risen dramatically, several churches of various denominations had been established, and Raleigh church membership rolls grew with an ever-increasing number of western Wake County Presbyterians. The idea of establishing a new Presbyterian church in the Cary-Apex area was not a new one to Gabriel. He had discussed the subject with a neighbor, Fred Manley, who was an elder in Raleigh's Saint Giles Presbyterian Church. Manley, like Gabriel, also saw the possibilities for a new church serving the growing Cary/Apex community. The first step Gabriel and Manley took was to place an announcement in The Cary News stating that a group would meet at Gabriel's home on October 13, 1977. The purpose was to test the interest in the Cary-Apex area.

This discussion group was small; eight people attended including Janet Holcombe who would soon become a significant leader, but they were all generally excited about the new church. A second meeting was planned for mid-November. The November 15, 1977, meeting at Greenwood Forest Baptist Church showed growing support for a new church. Thirty people attended the meeting, six of whom represented either Orange Presbytery or the Presbyterian Urban Council of Raleigh. The participants were eager to begin worship at the soonest possible date. A steering committee was appointed, and specific tasks were assigned. The steering committee was composed of Leon Gabriel (meeting location), Fred Manley (Treasurer), Janet Holcombe (Music), James McGinnis, Dick Griffin, and Dot Bass (Presbyterian Urban Council rep). Bill Stewart was asked by Janet Holcombe when the group could hold its first worship service. Stewart's response was that a worship service could be held as soon as the group felt they were ready.