

DR. JIM KILLEN

Senior Pastor 1969-1983

(Written For 25th Anniversary 1995)



I have far too many memories of Ashford Church to ever fit into a brief account like this. We spent fourteen years at Ashford. They were important years, the years when our children were growing up. The friendships and experiences we shared there will always be precious to us. But here are some things I remember in particular.

I remember telling a boy at Caldwell that we were moving to Houston and that I would pastor a church meeting in a mausoleum chapel. His eyes got big and he asked, "Are you going to have night services?"

I remember the scary feeling of starting with no building, no structure, nothing but a small group of committed people.

I remember knocking on literally thousands of doors and saying, "Hi, I am Jim Killen. I am a pastor who is organizing a new United Methodist Church in this neighborhood. I wonder if you would be interested in being part of it."

I remember holding a New Year's Eve service for my family on the floor of the incomplete temporary building so we could say the property was used for worship in 1969. That saved us a year of taxes on the property.

I remember the planning meetings we had when we thought through the unique character of the church we were organizing. We decided that we wanted it to be a church that would live in service to the world, not just one that would live to oil its own machinery. We wanted it to be like a small church in which everyone could feel that his or her contributions were important. We wanted it to be a creative church that would not be afraid to try something new.

I remember my fortieth birthday. We celebrated it at the church as we were preparing for the first "Peppermint Fair" which was to happen the next day. It was raining so hard the whole property was under water and we were afraid we would lose a major investment. But things dried out by morning and the fair was a great success.

I remember our planning for the first permanent building. The idea of building a "centrum"; a multi-purpose building that is primarily but not exclusively for worship, seemed to fit our unique congregational character. (The centrum concept served us well - until someone decided that would be a good name for a vitamin tablet!)

I remember the day we consecrated the Centrum. The Bishop came. He forgot his robe and sent his wife back to get it. She almost got arrested trying to get back on time. The Bishop also asked to be excused from the dinner we planned in his honor so he could watch the Super Bowl on TV. But it was a great day anyhow and we felt the church was finally launched on its career of service.

I remember so many things. I remember people working hard and sharing love. I remember victories - and also some defeats. I remember people - so many beautiful people. I have not named any because I could not possibly name all who were important to me and to my family and to the church. I remember many personal kindnesses. I remember things you did for me and for my family that were more important than you can possibly know. I will always remember Ashford. The years at Ashford will always be an important part of my life. With Love, *Jim Killen*

From Mada Killen:

We have such good memories of Ashford- So many good and exciting things happened during our time there.

The first year I taught school was the beginning of Ashford UMC's second year. I taught in an inner city school, Burrus Elementary, and a group of women from Ashford came to be volunteers in HISD's VIPS program at that school. I feel sure that the things they did then are a positive memory today for those whom they helped.

It was well known that Jim worked long hours seven days a week. So when the Centrum was being completed, another member and I were looking it over when she observed a closet between the offices. She commented, "Why, we could put a shower in here and Jim wouldn't ever have to go home."

So many of the children at Ashford UMC were also students in my classes at Ashford Elementary School. This was a real plus for me for I could see both their academic growth and their growth in the Christian Faith. I still feel such great love and pride for these young people. They truly helped me in the fulfillment of my life goals both as a teacher and a Christian.

Both of our children, James and Bethlyn, still have friends from Ashford. Bethlyn's husband, Brian Eby, worked for a while in the Counseling Center, so he, too, has been a part of Ashford.

We will never forget the wonderful sendoff party you gave us. We still look at the pictures and Jim is still fishing with the rod and reel you gave to him. The love offering helped us to have our home at Hilltop. We love you all dearly. ~ *Mada Killen*

From Bethlyn Killen-Eby:

I have a hard time believing that I am older today than my parents were the day we began our appointment to Ashford UMC (then unnamed). So many years have passed but so many memories remain. The array of memories span from meeting at the Mausoleum, to the wonderful Lakeview family retreats, to the custodian moving dad's chair and dad sitting on the floor, to the threat of the first Peppermint Fair being turned in the Peppermint Water Regatta due to the rain, to realizing the weekly disposal of coffee grinds made the garden flourish. I laugh at the strange things I remember.

One of my fondest memories came on December 31, 1970 (or 1971?). The yellow temporary buildings were in the process of being built. As I recall, at the last minute someone suggested to dad that the building needed to have been used for worship before the end of the year in order to be counted for the church tax break. Wanting to go completely by the book, as always, dad arranged a worship service. The Bible says: "Where two or more are gathered..." That night, as we sat on piles of lumber, mom, dad, James and I had the first worship service in the new facility. And it would have been great if we had not tried to sing. Clearly, we were not the Van Trapp Family Singers. But the sound of laughter had followed as our musical attempt filled the church with a joyful noise to the Lord. What a great beginning to a long tradition of joyful worship! ~ *Bethlyn Killen-Eby*