

“He was concerned about those to whom the missionaries ministered. His love for God’s work in foreign lands inspired him to build several churches in Africa.”

The Furniture Man

Sara Hege Conner

The pastor stood calmly by the new grave covered with plastic grass. Over the casket he read from John 14 and spoke comforting words to the family seated in rows of chairs under the blue, funeral home tent. Then he dropped a handful of dry soil on the coffin: “. . . dust to dust. . .”

My daddy was in that coffin, and my family was the one being comforted.

The man with the silvering hair and kind manner was the Rev. Charles Daniel Burchell. He had just arrived in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to be our new pastor at the First Pentecostal Holiness Church. In all my life I had known only one other.

Following the funeral, Brother and Sister Burchell drove me and my brother and sister to the Falcon Children’s Home—then known as an orphanage. But their care went beyond that of a pastor providing for his flock. They became my foster parents. I called them Mom and Pop, and a beautiful relationship flourished between us for over thirty years. They even arranged for my high school and college education.

Always working to help people, Brother Burchell paid for music lessons for many young people who are now serving as church musicians.



In his wisdom he often arranged for college tuition.

Charles, as his friends and congregations called him, had to quit school in the fourth grade. Nevertheless, he was well educated.

Everywhere he went—in his car, in his office, in his den, and in his hotel room where he stayed Monday through Friday as a traveling furniture salesman—he kept an ample supply of books. At night he would leave the store at five, eat his hotel dinner, then go to his room to read.

Rev. Burchell’s top priority in life was encouraging young people—at the orphanage, in the college, semi-

nary, or medical school.

On Wednesday nights “the Furniture Man” attended the mid-week service at the nearest Pentecostal Holiness church. On trips through Georgia, he often dropped in on the Wednesday Bible study at Emmanuel College in Franklin Springs.

The students greeted his smile and funny stories with laughter. He always left their spirits soaring.

Brother Burchell contributed generously to Emmanuel from the resources the Lord helped him to earn. He also encouraged the school by donating beds made by the furniture company for which he was employed.

For years Falcon Children’s Home also benefitted from Brother Burchell’s love and concern for young people. He supported the home with prayer, furniture, and contributions.

A couple who cares for their own children are to be admired. But when they provide for other children, that deserves special credit from the Lord.

Mom and Pop were gracious in their kindnesses. Many remember with thankfulness and pleasure their service and contributions to the churches they pastored in the Western North Carolina Conference.

Not selfish about his own church, Brother Burchell reached out to start new churches. One of the congregations he helped establish is