

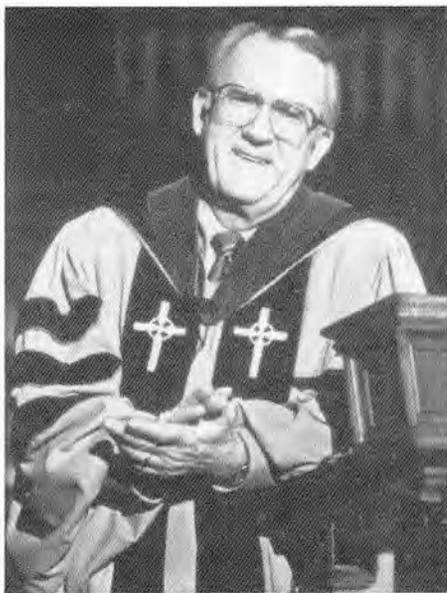


1970 - 1991

“The main thing...”

Andrew A. Jumper

In February, 1970, when Dr. Mauzé announced his plans to retire, he signaled his intent to depart by the following August. As a result, the Session promptly formed a search committee to call a successor. By July, the committee had a candidate to bring before the congregation. He was Andrew A. Jumper, “the young man from Texas.” Following the congregation’s vote to call Dr. Jumper on Sunday, July 12, the chairman of the search committee, Vern Schneider, telephoned Dr. Jumper’s church in Lubbock. Dr. Jumper’s teenaged son, Mark, took the call and relayed the message to his father in the pulpit. Dr. Jumper advised his own congregation of his acceptance and his son was able to pass on the message to the waiting Mr. Schneider.



Dr. Andrew Jumper.

Andrew A. Jumper was born in Mississippi in 1927 and graduated from the University of Mississippi following three years of service in the Coast Guard. He received his theological education at Austin Seminary, earning two master’s degrees, and was the recipient of three honorary degrees. In addition to serving as pastor of several churches in Texas between 1954 and 1970, he was active at the highest levels in the denomination. His arrival at Central in August, 1970, would begin the second of back-to-back twenty-one year pastorates.

Although Dr. Jumper and Dr. Mauzé shared common convictions about the church and its mission, the congregation soon noticed that their new pastor approached the work in a somewhat different manner. Many would long remember Dr. Jumper’s sermon titles: “The Devil’s Barber Shop,” “The Trouble With God’s Wife,” “Brylcreme Christians,” and “Spitting With The Wind.” He was an activist. Returning in June, 1971, from his first General Assembly meeting as pastor of Central, Dr. Jumper shared his perception of the “new spirit” in the denomination. “I know the church belongs to God,” he declared. “I know revival is beginning to sweep across this country and I know I intend to be a part

of it. I want to be where the action is. I want to be on the cutting edge of what God is doing...And I want you with me to share in the mighty move of God in the 20th century." Indeed, the emphasis on revival and Central's increasing voice in denominational issues would be the two dominating factors that shaped the life of the congregation throughout the decade.

Early in 1971, Central hosted the first of several "lay renewals" held during Dr. Jumper's pastorate. In a renewal event, a guest minister and a team of lay persons from other areas would be invited into a church to share their faith in small group settings. The renewals had a profound influence on the lives of many in the congregation as they came to a conscious and clearly articulated personal faith. Several members have reflected upon the impact of the first renewal in 1971. "My lifestyle changed at that point and has never been the same," said one. Others made new or renewed decisions to follow Christ. "It was a new experience for me," remembered another, "to hear laymen talking about the importance of the Lord in their lives. Up to that time all of what I had heard came from pastors and Sunday School teachers. It was very different for me to hear lay people sharing their faith and that's when I came to make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ."

Drawing people to a personal faith and commitment was a hallmark of Dr. Jumper's sermons. Many of them ended with questions: What will you do with Jesus? Are you a Christian with a burning heart? Who will stand up for Jesus? As increasing numbers of people responded to this evangelical message, Central again faced a space problem.

The Session had rejected a proposal in 1972 to purchase the property immediately south of the church. By 1976, however, it became clear that the church would have to expand its facilities. "A church simply does not stay still," the building committee wrote in its report. "We will either progress or regress and we would emphasize again that we are at a point of decision." The congregation decided to build on the property owned across Hanley Road, and the new educational building and parking deck were dedicated on April 9, 1978.

The church embarked on this major construction project, despite concerns about the effect a possible union of the Northern and Southern Churches might have on Central and its property. If Central decided to



In 1989, Dr. Jumper was elected moderator of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, its highest office. With him are previous moderators, Perry Mobley and James Van Dyke.



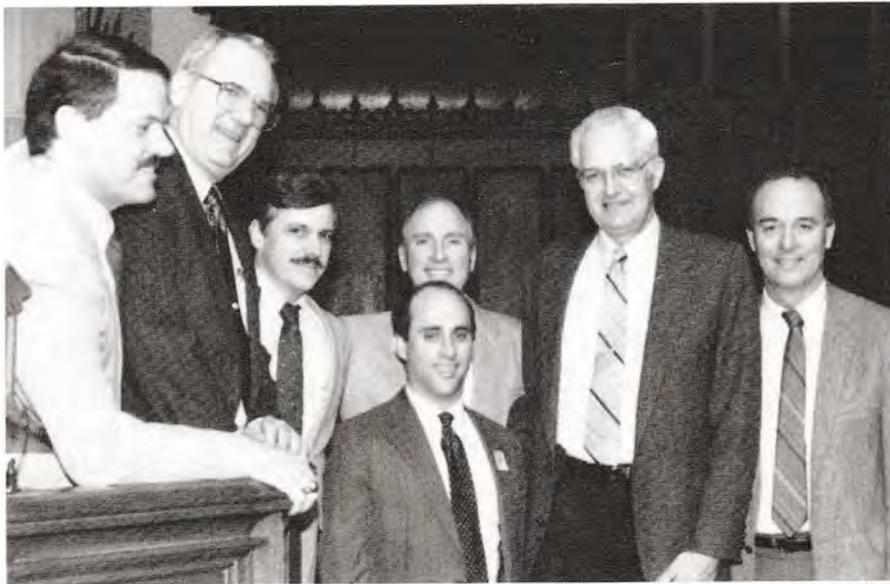
Construction of the new education building around the existing one that had housed "Central School for the Young Years." The school moved into a new building with a new name, Central Christian School.

withdraw from the new body, it was uncertain whether or not it could keep its property. (In the Northern Church, an individual church did not have title to its own property; it was held "in trust" for the denomination.)

Although this did not prevent Central from expanding, denominational concerns did have a marked effect on the church's giving patterns. In the past, most of Central's financial contributions were directed toward church-sponsored programs or specifically Presbyterian benevolences, such as the Farmington Orphanage and the School of the Ozarks. As the PCUS moved toward a more liberal stance, Central aligned itself with more conservative, evangelical thinking. The church broadened its benevolences to include non-denominational and para-church organizations, such as Campus Crusade for Christ, Wycliffe Bible Translators, the National Association of Evangelicals and the Sudan Interior Mission. Central continued to give to Presbyterian causes, but most often through designated gifts to the Presbytery so that monies could not be channeled into causes with which the church did not agree.

Dr. Jumper encouraged increased participation in the Presbytery and, along with his leadership in the Covenant Fellowship of Presbyterians, this participation translated into an influential conservative voice at the General Assembly level. Dr. Jumper was one of several evangelical conservatives from both denominations appointed to the Joint Committee on Union in 1979. Although the Committee failed to adopt most of the conservative proposals, it did agree to a provision that allowed Southern churches to leave a reunified denomination with their property should they choose to do so. Even though the Plan for Reunion seemed far from ideal, the Covenant Fellowship endorsed it in 1981. Dr. Douglas Harper, a colleague of Dr. Jumper's on the committee, wrote in the summer of 1981 that "Dr. Jumper and I are convinced that the reunion of the two denominations is inevitable... It is our conviction that this Plan offers the best opportunities that we will ever have for reuniting Presbyterians in our nation."

Even as the two churches were moving toward reunion, disaffected evangelicals and conservatives from both denominations formed a new denomination in 1981. The first General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) was called to order on September 22, 1981. Although Central was not a part of the new denomination, Dr. Jumper played a key role in its founding, writing the church's Book of Order.



Expanding ministries meant expanding staff. Pictured are pastors Dave Elliott, Andy Jumper, Austin McCaskill, Dave Boswell, John Splinter, Don Fortson and Bob Bayley.

Reunion was not anticipated until June of 1983 and in the interim, Central moved to become a “union” church. The Book of Order of the Southern Church (PCUS) allowed congregations to reorganize as members of two reformed bodies (deemed by some to be an “escape” measure for churches uneasy with the prospect of reunion with the Northern Church). On May 30, 1982, the congregation voted to petition the Presbytery of Southeast Missouri (PCUS) and the Presbytery of the Midwest (EPC) to become members of both. Both denominations accepted the petition the following month.

Status as a union church was not greeted with unanimous support. Since Central remained in the Southern Church which within the year would in all likelihood be reunited with the Northern Church (UPCUSA), the Session and congregation still needed to make decisions regarding that reunion. For months, the Session debated the issue and on December 11, 1982, adopted a statement in support of the proposed union. The announcement noted that “While far from unanimous, the statement was approved by a substantial majority [of elders].”

Reunion did occur in June, 1983, resulting in the birth of the Presbyterian Church, United States of America (PCUSA). A number of officers and members of Central left the church, unable or unwilling to support the new denomination. Dr. Jumper briefly addressed the situation in an article in *The Centralian* in October, 1983. In spite of the reunion, “Central is not any different. It is still the conservative, evangelical

church it has always been... I am still the same person,” he declared, “believing the same things, preaching the same gospel that I always have... No, Central hasn’t changed - and will not change. It is still the same church, preaching the gospel, believing the Bible, teaching the faith, and leading people into a saving relationship to Jesus Christ.”

Central continued on its same course. New staff members were added as programs and ministries expanded. Crowding in worship services and parking woes continued to be problems. The PCUSA did not change, either. As soon as rules permitted the church to do so, Central began proceedings to separate from the denomination and align itself solely with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The Session cited financial and leadership resources that were “stretched too thin in supporting both denominations.” Before the vote on September 8, 1985, Dr. Jumper spoke to the congregation:



Central members gained hands-on experience with missions in the former Soviet Union, Brazil, Haiti, India, Korea, Mexico, Jamaica and Argentina.

Today we belong to two denominations. They are very different. Their commitments, their goals, their priorities are vastly different. We are voting to belong to only one of these denominations, one that shares our commitments, our goals and our priorities. We are not turning our backs on the other, any more than Paul turned his back on Barnabas. Indeed, in years to come, young John Mark [whom Paul had refused to allow on the journey] was to become a trusted and reliable colleague of Paul. But at that moment in history, Barnabas and Paul had different gifts, different missions, and different directions to travel. So it is that the Session of Central is convinced that God is calling us to travel in new and different directions.

The congregation chose by a vote of 973 to 96 to request dismissal to the EPC, and the move was made official in January, 1986.

No longer focused on denominational controversy, the church needed to redirect its considerable energies. Dr. Jumper raised the questions: “What is our vision for the rest of this century? What is our hope, what is our dream, where are we going, what is our service to Jesus Christ for the next 15 years of this 20th century and what about our vision for the coming new century?” There was a renewed interest in missions as the EPC began working with churches in Brazil and Argentina. Central had always supported missions through benevolence giving, but by the mid-

1980's, increasing numbers of individuals and groups within the church gained first-hand experience through short-term mission work. By 1987, Central had seven pastors on staff to direct its ever-expanding ministries. Membership exceeded 2,600.

As the church prospered, however, its pastor's health began to fail. In April, 1986, Dr. Jumper underwent surgery to treat a massive infection in his spine. The infection was life-threatening and further surgery was required. Two years later, he was diagnosed with cancer and again had surgery and radiation therapy. The cancer spread, requiring still more operations and therapy. In July, 1991, a brain tumor was successfully removed. Although Dr. Jumper continued to work, it became apparent that his ministry was nearing an end.

In a sermon delivered that September, Dr. Jumper pondered his own retirement and the future of the church. "As I approach the end of my ministry," he said, "the question I have in my heart must be the same question that Christians and pastors have raised for thousands of years...Looking into the future and wondering about tomorrow...we want to ask those in the future, 'Is the church still standing?'" He concluded:

As I think about Central - about its past and the things it has done; about its present and the things it is accomplishing; I pray for the future that the work we have begun together will remain and grow. After all, we have something to stand on, the Word of God, we have something to stand for, the laws of a just Father, and above all we have someone to stand with us.

I want to say to you that whatever the days ahead may hold for me, I am counting on you to keep the focus on Jesus Christ. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. And though I may be called shortly to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will go confidently and gladly for he is with me...And I know that behind there will be left a good work that will endure and endure. And after all, that is the main thing.

Eighteen years before, Dr. Jumper's first wife, Elizabeth, had died of cancer. What he had written shortly after her death was just as relevant for the church in 1991 as it had been in 1973:



In addition to ministries within the church, Central has provided numerous services to the community, such as the Central Christian Counseling Center.

You know, life brings us many unexpected things - sometimes they are not pleasant and we don't understand them. Yet, this moment right now has meaning and significance because we can trust that whatever happened to us in days past, never for a moment were we out of God's hand; never for a moment was our situation out of his control. And we can trust the future, too. The future may not be pleasant - it may hold much emptiness, much loneliness, much uncertainty and fear. But the future, too, is in God's hand.

Dr. Jumper preached his final sermon on Christmas Eve, 1991. His health continued to fail, and he died on May 28, 1992.

Aerial view, Central Presbyterian Church

