

# northlake\_dean\_60903

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## **Pastor and music minister have been singing from the same page for years**

**By George Henson**

*Staff Writer*

GARLAND—Few churches have pastors stay for 25 years. The same could be said about ministers of music.

Northlake Baptist Church in Garland has both, however. Pastor Bob Dean celebrated his 25th anniversary April 25, and Minister of Music Lynn Christie served the church a quarter of a century as of June 1.

Two things have kept this ministry team together so long, they report: A definitive sense of God's calling to the church and the fact that they like one another.

The church was just over a year old when it called the two young men in 1978. It had been started by about 20 families from Orchard Hills Baptist Church in Garland on land purchased by the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Dallas Baptist Association.

“We were only 25 and 26 years old,” Dean recalled. “This church took a chance on two really young guys.”

The two had met in 1973 at the Baptist Student Union state leadership conference. Dean was BSU president at Baylor University, and Christie was

his counterpart at North Texas State University. Dean also was state BSU president and presided at the meeting; Christie was the conference worship leader.

The two maintained the connection when Dean became pastor at Northlake. When the church decided to hire a worship leader, Dean immediately thought of Christie.

By that time, both men were married to women they also met through the BSU.

Despite the passage of time, both men have committed to remain learners.

“My greatest fear is that we get in a rut,” Christie said. The church helps guard against that by providing the staff with scheduled sabbaticals in which continuing education is a major part. The staff also jointly discusses current books related to ministry.

“The challenge is to stay fresh and to carry out the vision,” Dean said. “The work of the kingdom of God is too important not to do it well.”

“We've already demonstrated we can work in harmony,” Christie agreed, “but the struggle is to keep it fresh.”

Keeping it fresh doesn't mean chasing every new ministry fad and forgetting the vision of reaching people for Christ, however.

“From Day 1, Bob has exemplified and held out that same vision, and we are seeing that vision come to fruition,” Christie asserted. “Not many of those original 20 families that came out of Orchard Hills are still here, but the vision has remained the same.”

Methods have changed, Dean said. “Needs of people have changed. The style of worship has changed. We are constantly trying to target the needs of our community and find the best way to minister to those needs.”

Growth in the church necessitated a recent building program, providing the church with a larger sanctuary and a gymnasium. Using the gym to reach children in the community through the Upward Basketball program, and an expanded Easter production permitted by the additional worship space are two ways the church has continued to try to reach its community. The church also sponsors a Hispanic mission.

While their long ministry association is a boon to them, Dean admits it may could be off-putting to new staff members.

“We really try to share leadership and really have moved into more of a mentoring role with the rest of the staff,” Dean said. “We also try to show them the value of longevity in one church, because we think there is a real benefit in that.”

The lessons must be taking. Youth Minister/Administrator Chris Trent has been on staff six years, and Children's Minister Jennifer Evans has been at Northlake five years. While not approaching Dean's and Christie's tenures, both terms are beyond the average.

The spirit of the church also contributes to the ministers' success, they said.

“Our kids love this place, and not all ministers' kids can say that,” Christie said. “One of the greatest gifts either of us have been given is to raise our kids in a happy church.”

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