

St. Johns Methodist Church

4555 Bee Ridge Road

Sarasota, Florida

MINISTER
CLAUDE O. TUCKER

H I S T O R Y

ST. JAMES METHODIST CHURCH

4555 Bee Ridge Road

Sarasota, Florida

December 1958 through November 1962

HISTORY OF ST. JOHNS METHODIST CHURCH

St. Johns Methodist Church, 4555 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota, Florida was established March 29, 1959. However, before this date there was much work that had taken place. Realizing the need for a church in the Southeast section of Sarasota, Dr. Harry H. Waller, District Superintendent and the District Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Sarasota District surveyed possible sites, and on January 13th, 1958 placed a binder on the property on Bee Ridge Road. In December of 1959 the final payment of approximately \$ 5,000.00 was made from a grant of that amount from the Livingston Board, Jacksonville, Florida.

In August of 1958 a survey of the area was conducted by Richard McFarland, student at Boston University, under the direction of the District Board.

On December 1, 1958, Reverend Claude O. Tucker, a pastor since 1951 in the state of Indiana, was assigned as pastor. With his wife, Gazelle and three children, Dennis, Cynthia and Sandra, he moved first to 3020 Betty Drive for thirty days, then to 2227 Hyde Park Street, and on July 9, 1959 to 5700 Piper Place, purchased as parsonage one month earlier. The parsonage is a three bedroom house, one bathroom, purchased from H. E. Potter. At the time of purchase, the house was approximately three years old.

Worship services began on December 14, 1958, the second Sunday in December in the Sarasota Springs Realty Offices of Mr. C.T. Lind and Mr. Sid Fisher, these gentlemen graciously donated the facilities. For the first service, the Ministerial Association of Elkhart, Indiana sent a bouquet to be on the table belonging to the realty office; Mr. Dennis Ledbetter had built a table lecturn and a cross and a well known lady of the community who wishes to remain anonymous presented and prepared a very fine velvet covering for the table. The small pump organ used for the service and used until we went to Wilson-Hughes was provided by Mr. Willie Roberts of Roberts Funeral Home. Miss Barbara Wenger presided at the organ.

In February, a second morning worship service was started, and on March 1, 1959 the growing flock moved to Wilson-Hughes Funeral Home, also graciously provided without charge by Mr. Dean Wilson and Mr. William Hughes. By this time the congregation had purchased an organ with a partial payment of \$ 200.00 given anonymously, and eventually was paid out without too great difficulty by the congregation.

In the early days of the Church, January 1959, until organization date, Reverend Tucker had organizational meetings on Sunday evenings in different homes of the parish. These meetings were really membership classes in which basic materials regarding the Methodist Church, Christianity and the Christian Faith were discussed. These meetings were continued for awhile after organization. The first one was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Boterf on Cambridge Drive.

The organization of the congregation as an established church took place on Easter Sunday, March 29, 1959 following the worship service. Dr. Waller presided over the organizational proceedings. Forty-four members were received by the pastor at the close of the worship service, and the church was named St. Johns Methodist Church. There were three stewards - Raymond Heslet, Kenneth Brown, James Wood; three trustees - Charles Aderholdt, Robert Boterf, Clifford Cyphers; recording steward, Mrs. Raymond Heslet; and church school superintendent - J. Gilbert Smith, elected. There were very many friends who visited including the Ardon E. Millers from Reverend Tucker's former pastorate in Elkhart, Indiana. Of the members received, there was no large nucleus from any one church, in fact the largest number was seven who came from Trinity Methodist Church in Sarasota.

On April 5, 1959, the Church School was organized and classes began that day. The Woman's Society of Christian Service was organized on May 19, 1959, present for this organization were several District Officers. Local officers were elected for the local society as follows: President, Mrs. Oris G. Lee; Vice-President, Mrs. L. P. Kanode; Recording Secretary, Mrs. James Wachob; Treasurer, Mrs. Harold Dunn; Secretary of Spiritual Life, Mrs. Clifford Cyphers; Secretary of Promotion, Mrs. Dennis Ledbetter; Secretary of Missionary Education and Service, Mrs. Francis Forde; Chairman of Committee on Nominations, Mrs. Kenneth Brown. Evening Youth Groups had been meeting since February and were later organized into Junior High and Senior High groups. The first Official Board Meeting of St. Johns Methodist Church met with Dr. Waller and Reverend Tucker at the District Parsonage, 2042 Oak Street, Sarasota, Wednesday, April 1, 1959 at 8:00 PM.

The first Chairman of the Official Board of St. Johns Methodist Church was Raymond Heslet. The first President of the Corporation was Clifford Cyphers. The first President of the Methodist Youth Fellowship was Claude Eric Lee. The Chancel Choir was organized early in November, 1959.

The first every member canvas for pledges was on April 26 and 27, 1960 at the Bee Ridge Woman's Club. The goal was for over \$ 8,000.00

On May 4, Mr. Frank Martin, architect with De Minicis and Patterson of Tampa, was secured as architect. At the Quarterly Conference we moved to have our preliminary plans drawn.

The new church continued to meet at Wilson-Hughes Funeral Home in the Chapel throughout the summer and the fall. Following the worship service on December 20, 1959, the congregation assembled at the church site on Bee Ridge Road for ground breaking ceremony. This was to commemorate the paying off of the property, making it the possession, at this time, of the District Board of Missions and Church Extension. This property was later turned over to St. Johns Methodist Church and congregation. The ground breaking ceremony was an interesting sight; seeing the congregation surround an area on the grounds where the Fellowship Hall was to be placed. After an appropriate ceremony led by Dr. Waller and Reverend Tucker, spades of dirt were turned by the officials and by various members of the congregation, after which a box was placed in the hole that had been dug and people filed and dropped a donation in, about \$ 50.00 was received on this day.

These were busy and exciting days for the congregation and they worked to develop plans for their church. They continued to meet in Wilson-Hughes Funeral Home and finally plans were ready for the construction of the Fellowship Hall. Construction began on the Fellowship Hall the week of September 6, 1960. Rowe-Mitchell, Inc. Contractors. There was a delay in receiving the laminated beams but construction went along well other than that, and the building was ready for occupancy in February 1961.

The day of Opening and Consecration was February 26, 1961. Dr. Waller, the District Superintendent was present to deliver the address and his sermon was entitled "The Need for Sanctuary". There was also the reception of new members. Present were the parents of the pastor, Mr. and Mrs. S. F. Tucker of Las Animas, Colorado, who had driven some 1800 miles. A beautiful display of flowers was presented by a group from the Trinity Methodist Church in Elkhart, Indiana where the pastor had previously been associated. This was a great day for the new congregation, the church was filled to overflowing. Designed to seat 150 people, over 300 were present and others could not get in. Also present were the contractors, Mr. Donald Rowe and Mr. Thomas Mitchell and their families. These

two gentlemen also presented the congregation with two palms. Mr. Frank Martin, the architect was also here and recognized. Many friends from other churches in town were in the congregation.

The estimated value of Church, equipment and land is \$ 58,000.00 exclusive of kitchen furnishings which were not included in the contract, estimated value of Parsonage, furniture and land \$ 12,800.00, bring us a total estimated valuation nearly \$ 71,000.00. The cost of the Fellowship Hall does not include the furnishings, which at this time are valued around \$ 5,000.00.

The first significant fund raising campaign for the new church took place March 11 to 15, 1960. The goal for this campaign was \$ 12,000.00 in five days for the purpose of beginning construction on the Fellowship Hall. General Chairman for the campaign was Mr. J. Gilbert Smith. Director for this campaign was the Reverend Jack Adams of Tarboux Methodist Church, Miami, Florida. The "Day of Destiny" Banquet was held on Friday, March 11 at 7:00 PM at the M & M Cafeteria (now The Colonnade Restaurant), at which the goal was surpassed. Pledges that night were over \$ 18,000.00, \$ 5,200.00 to \$ 5,400.00 from members of First Methodist Church. These pledges were secured by Mr. Willie Roberts. The pledges were payable on a two year payment plan. Approximately 54 were present at this "Day of Destiny" Banquet. The great success of this campaign gave tremendous impetus to the enthusiasm and to the work of the forming of the new congregation. Cost of the Fellowship Hall was approximately \$ 45,000.00 and the site at \$ 10,000.00.

The building was financed by a loan from First Federal Savings and Loan Association in the amount of \$ 32,500.00. The Building Committee was composed of the following: Clifford Cyphers, Chairman; Charles Aderholdt, Robert Boterf, Kenneth Brown, Raymond Heslet, Jr. Gilbert Smith, James Wachob.

Throughout the life of this young congregation there has been much enthusiasm, the congregation has faced its challenges well. Through all of these challenges was the underlying feeling that "We can do it, the Lord being our Helper". The church has grown because of the enthusiasm, location, and its friendliness.

A number of memorials have been provided for our Church. The Cross, the Candle Holders, Candles and Flower Vases were donated by Mr. and Mrs. S. J. Linton in memory of Mrs. Linton's mother, Mrs. Edda E. Burke. We have had a few hymnals donated in memorial, by Mrs. L. P. Kanode in honor of her husband, L. P. Kanode, and some by Mrs. G. R. Ross in honor of her husband "Andy" Ross. The Pulpit, Lectern, and Altar Table were constructed for us by Mr. Howard Gilmore in memory of his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Roy M. Gilmore, and presented to the Church. The Baptismal Font was made and placed by Mr. S. J. Linton as a memorial to his mother and father. Gifts to the Building Fund have been given as memorials for Mr. Sam Bowen, Mr. L. P. Kanode, Mr. G. R. Ross, Mrs. Ward Atwater. A Baldwin Piano is presently to be donated by Mrs. M. E. Lude as a memorial to her late husband, M. E. Lude.

The Youth presented the American Flag and the Christian Flag to the Church on Sunday, November 4, 1962. They earned the money by various projects; such as car washing, etc. Also presented to the Church have been such things as: - 25 hymnals by Mr. Willie Roberts, 25 hymnals by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Phoebus, Baptismal Bowl by Mr. and Mrs. Victor A. Hall, Jr. and the offering plates by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph M. Baierl, two large palm trees by Mrs. Sam Bowen.

At the present time the congregation is still growing, the Sunday School and all functions of the Church take place in the Fellowship Hall and the need is now being felt to make plans for further expansion by the construction of an educational unit. St. Johns was helped by the District through the Fellowship of Sponsors Plan and, First Methodist Church of Sarasota has contributed considerable help for which the congregation is most grateful.

In November of 1961, St. Johns Methodist Church joined with the other churches in Sarasota for an area wide Methodist Evangelistic Mission in which Dr. Lawrence Lacour from the General Board of Evangelism was the preacher. These services were held in First Methodist Church in Sarasota.

Other special meetings that St. Johns Methodist Church has had so far in its brief history: - In February of 1960, St. Johns joined with Trinity Methodist Church of Sarasota at Trinity for a week of Revival Services. The Reverend McLaurin M. Meredith of Wauchula, was the speaker. In 1961, St. Johns, Trinity, and Vamo joined together for Holy Week Services held at St. Johns in the newly completed Fellowship Hall, Dr. Waller was the speaker. In 1962, Holy Week

Services were again held at St. Johns with Vamo Methodist Church participating, and doing the preaching were the ministers of these churches, Reverend Tucker of St. Johns and Reverend Nysewander of Vamo.

We reported a membership of 55 members in the church at the 1959 Annual Conference; at the 1960 Annual Conference we reported 107; and to the 1961 Annual Conference we reported 148; and at the 1962 Annual Conference we reported a total membership of 198. This shows the growth of the Church and included in these figures are the deletions by death and transfer, so these figures show the net increase in our membership. Present membership at this writing in November, 1962, is 200.

Church School membership was shown to be 60 at the 1959 Annual Conference; 87 at the 1960 Annual Conference; 132 in 1961; 202 at the 1962 Annual Conference.

The site on which St. Johns is placed is the corner property at Bee Ridge Road and Bond Place. The size of the plot amounts to an acre and a half of ground. There is to be a shopping area immediately to the west of the Church which will provide parking space for us along with on street parking and some parking available on the property.