

NEW PHILADELPHUS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

In 1957, Reverend Oscar Cummings, a farmer and lay preacher, was appointed to begin work at \$25 a month in Red Springs. The aim was to establish a Native American congregation in the area. He served under the supervision of The Reverend D. F. Lowry, pastor at Ashpole and District Director of Church Extension of the Fayetteville District. Rev. Oscar and his family began services in what was called the "Old Church House". The three-room house, located on Buie Mill Pond, soon accommodated Sunday School Classes and Vacation Bible School.

Rev. Oscar, like his mentor Rev. D. F., was tireless in his work for the church. He would visit around the community inviting those who did not attend to come to church. The group of 40 - 50 soon moved into an abandoned cafe located on the east side of highway 710, two miles south of Red Springs. On October 2, 1959, the Conference Board of Missions purchased the cafe from Douglas Hall and his wife for \$3,000. A Ten Dollar Club grant of \$6,000 was made to renovate the cafe into a sanctuary, and the old pool hall to the rear of the property into a fellowship hall.

The Reverend Simeon Cummings, serving Prospect Church in 1959, was selected to become the supervising pastor. He and Dr. J. E. Garlington, district superintendent, organized the church on November 7 with thirty-nine members, naming it Philadelphus, after an old Robeson County landmark located nearby. The building was crude, but Reverend Oscar and his members raised money - plate sales, box suppers, and cake sales - to do some things at the church. It was always called the "poor church".

Among the early members were Cleveland Jacobs, Liza Lambert, Levi and Daisy Lee Brewer, Curt and Margaret Locklear, Mike and Martha Maynor and children, Adaline Revels, Mozelle Revels, Snodie Lowry and children, and Burnie and Maggie Locklear and children.

The fledgling church became a special project of the WSCS. They visited, sent money and helpers. A series of deaconesses worked with the new congregation. Alta Nye, Rebecca Moddlemog, and Martha Schlapbach provided leadership training, worked with the youth and the overall church program, and did community visitation as well. They served well and long.

With the coming of D. F. as pastor in 1961 additional building grants were made. Jakie Locklear, a hard working carpenter from the Prospect Community, found his niche at Philadelphus. Having become an associate member of the conference in 1969, Locklear was appointed pastor at Philadelphus and served there with "lasting good influence" until his untimely death on June 19, 1973.

The Philadelphus membership reached one hundred in 1966; the remodeled building was quite inadequate for the growing congregation. After much discussion with the District Superintendent Reverend Graham Eubank, the Duke Endowment

Office, and their architect, N. H. Haines, a decision was made to renovate the buildings. The work was attempted, but failed, as did efforts to obtain additional property joining the less-than-an-acre lot.

In their quandry, members began to look elsewhere for a place to meet. They were offered the purchase of a two-acre site on the same highway about three miles south of their present site, which was bought in 1975. The price, \$4,000. Over a relatively short period of time, the congregation purchased the new site and raised \$20,000 toward the beginning construction. Rev. Oscar and his members were back into fundraisings, and the people responded once again. For the \$147,000 building, Philadelphus received what was the first low interest Ethnic Minority Local Church loan for this conference. The amount was \$35,000. The Duke Endowment was an important party in the planning process and contributed \$31,500. Other grants were received. The final grant came from the Duke Endowment in 1983, as the congregation continued to contribute to the building fund all during construction. The new church was named New Philadelphus and was consecrated by Bishop Blackburn in 1978.

Pastors at the present location have been Reverend Dufrene Cummings, Rev. Ted Brooks, Rev. Kenneth Locklear, and Reverend Tryon D. Lowry.

Hundreds of people pass this prominent location every day as they travel through Robeson County. They see this lovely Methodist meeting place which witnesses to the power of Christian cooperation and the will and self-determination of a congregation rewarded by a unique connectional system.