

WEST ROBESON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1989

Pastor's Report

West Robeson United Methodist Church, located in the NC Conference of the Rockingham District, is a newly chartered church. This is a church that "wants to be a church." This reminds me of the following story which supposedly happened or is true.

A friend of Socrates came to him one evening after struggling with his commitment as a Christian. He asked, "Socrates I want to be a truly committed Christian. How can I do just that?" Socrates asked him to walk with him to a nearby river. Upon arriving they walked into the water about waist deep. All of a sudden Socrates ducked his friend under the water and held him there until he could not breathe anymore. At that moment Socrates released him. His friend came up out of the water very angry to say the least and asked "Socrates are you crazy? What were you trying to do, drown me?"

"No," Socrates replied. "What did you want most when you were under the water?" asked Socrates. His friend replied that he was asking a foolish question. He continued on to say that he wanted to breathe more than anything else. To which Socrates said, "My friend when you want to be a truly committed Christian as much as you wanted that breath of air, you will be just that."

As the Director of Native American Larger Parish, several persons approached me about the possibility of becoming United Methodist and establishing a church in the NC Conference particularly in the Rockingham District. These persons had been Baptist all of their lives. They wanted to find a church that would accept them as persons of worth and a church that could provide trained leadership to lead into effective wholistic ministry in the West Robeson community or often referred to as "Brooklyn Community." The group decided to become a UMC and they named the church West Robeson.

Twenty-one persons gathered in a store front building in Pembroke for our first worship on September 6, 1987. Several months later we were forced to move to a larger facility, formerly known as Wonderland Child-care. In the store front we had to compete with the train and at Wonderland it proved to be a "WONDER." We encountered no gas, no heat, no lights, and no electricity from time to time. Even the owner started remodeling without any warning. Temporarily, we moved to Pembroke: First UMC and worshipped for about one month. We wanted to move out but could we?

Finally we knew we must move out on faith. The "want to" was put to the test. By faith, we purchased a seven acre site in the West Robeson community from a member of Prospect UMC, Mr. James H. Dial, in the amount of \$35,000. Mr. Dial graciously gave \$7,000 back to the church as a donation.

The church membership began to work and sacrifice. One of our senior citizens picked up cans and bottles, sold used clothing and solicited donations along with several other members. Several of the United Methodist local churches gave gifts totaling over \$1,000 on our Charter Sunday, April 10, 1988. Another member of Prospect UMC, Dr. Adolph Dial gave \$1,000 to be matched by the church. This "want to" church raised \$1,341. Several persons from Pembroke: FUMC, Sandy Plains UMC, and Prospect UMC have assisted in plate sales to raise funds. The NC Conference Board of Missions gave a \$10,000 grant. Dr. Thomas Collins, Director of Church Extension for the NC Conference, was instrumental in getting this grant. The grant, gifts, and offerings enabled us to make our first payment of \$15,000. Wouldn't you say that this is connectionalism at its best?

It is interesting to note that we raised \$15,000 in addition to our budget in 1988 and we borrowed \$15,000 at a local bank. When the second payment came due we needed \$2,000 to make our second full payment of \$15,000. Where could we find the funds? We prayed but also put hands, feet and heads into our prayers. We called on Dr. Collins again and after he checked around he found our prayer was already answered. Our Conference Board of Missions had mailed out \$4,400 to our church to assist us the day before our prayers were prayed. Praise the Lord O my soul! Our present indebtedness is \$23,000.

With that assistance, we further stepped out in faith and purchased an old day care building and 3/4 of an acre of land adjacent to our present land. This gave us a place to worship and hold our church school. Can you imagine 83 people in a 800 sq. ft. building? This happened in 1989.

Since that time, the church has continued to grow with seven new members and nine new preparatory members. This gives the church a total membership of 56 including our preparatory members. Our average Worship attendance is 51 and Church School is 39 with an average offering of \$413. We have five Church School classes, a weekly Bible Study and choir rehearsal and study time. It is obvious that this church needs to be commended for its outstanding work. If you could have participated in our Vacation Bible School!! It is proving to be an "extraordinary church" because the membership "wants to." Do you believe West Robeson UMC has had no Equitable Salary Support and has paid \$1,200 for Outreach Ministries? Praise the Lord! Would you believe we have raised \$58,000 in 18 months?

The year of 1990 is very inviting to West Robeson UMC. We have been carrying a heavy load since we were chartered but we believe help is on the way. However, we must acknowledge the gifts of \$14,000 from our NC Conference. Hopefully, we will receive very soon from the Capital Campaign Fund some assistance to aid us in an addition we are presently building with the help of Bethel UMC in Bahema, NC, Al Trotter, pastor. This facility will enable the church to begin to evangelize again. We are filled to capacity NOW. No more room!

So we will continue to give time, talents and tithes to the glory of God. We praise Him for the GREAT THINGS HE HAS DONE. We have planted, watered and God has given the increase. How can we not praise the Lord?

In Service for Christ,
Jerry Lowry