

1247
WRIGHTSBORO METHODIST CHURCH

This is the story of one of the newest Methodist churches in the Wilmington Area. The story begins as does the history of the church in a meeting of the official board of Grace Methodist church in Wilmington, N. C., In this meeting one of the officials stood up and delivered to those gathered a message on missions and he specifically urged that a Methodist church be organized in the community of Wrightsboro, just 3 miles north of the city on highway #117. The Methodist Men of the church indicated that they would sponsor the new church. The men immediately set up committees to work toward this end. In October and November of 1957 these men surveyed the community and found a large number of people who were interested in the organization of a Methodist church. At this point the first difficulty in the birth of the church was encountered - no suitable temporary location for the church could be found. The men then located and rented a house for the preacher who would be appointed to organize the church. On March 1, 1958 the Rev. Allen Wentz, Jr. and his family moved into the temporary parsonage at 4 Hamilton Drive., Wilmington, N. C.

The first month was spent in studying the survey cards and visiting among the prospects. Several unsuccessful attempts were made at securing a building lot for the church. Land owners appeared reluctant to sell their property as a lot for a church. Shortly thereafter, Mr. N. C. Littlejohn, Sr., a prospective member, offered to give a 20' X 50' building for use as a temporary church; however at that time no lot had been secured for the church. After a difficult period of bargaining, a 100' X 200' lot on N. Kerr Ave., across from the Wrightsboro Clubhouse was purchased from a local owner by the Grace Men's Club. Also an option agreement was made on the neighboring lot. Interested prospects were anxious to meet together, so on Easter Sunday, April 6, 1958, the pastor and 23 persons met together for worship in the home of N. W. Bond on the Castle Hayne Road. With labor from the community and Grace Church, the building was completely remodeled and readied for use as the church building. June 8, 1958 was set as organizational Sunday, and plans were made to have it in the new building. Mr. H. L. "Jack" White, the Church School Supt. to be, gave a piano to the church. Pews, chairs, and other furnishings were provided by Grace and Sunset Park Methodist Churches. On Sunday June 8, 1958 the small church building was packed to capacity for the official organizational service. The District Supt., Dr. J. E. Garlington officially organized the church as Wrightsboro Methodist Church and 34 members were received into the fellowship of the church, 39 members were reported to the Annual Conference at the end of the month.

On June 14, 1958 the Methodist Men of Grace Church sponsored a Fish Fry with the proceeds going to the new church. In addition these men assumed a note for \$1400.00 which was necessary in order to pay for material used in getting the building in shape for a church. On June 15th, the Sunday School was organized with 23 members and only 3 classes. It was already evident that the new church needed other organizations to carry on the work of the church.

On July 27th the Women's Society of Christian Service was organized and Mrs. E. M. Mooneyham was elected to head the first group of 15 ladies. Not to be out done the Methodist Men organized on July 28th and elected Mr. Charles Littlejohn as president. Another milestone in the life of the new church was reached when the infant daughter, Cynthia Gay, of Mr. and Mrs. Allen F. Grimstead, Jr. was baptized on July 30, 1958. Already the young church evidenced quick growth and a need for additional space was seen. The official board then, after much consideration, decided to add a unit 28' x 48' which would serve as the sanctuary for the church. In October 1958, with the faithful men of the church doing the work, the construction of the building was begun. The work continued through the winter with the fellows working on their off days and in the night hours - floodlights had been set up in order that more time could be spent in working. Mr. E. M. Mooneyham served as the "taskmaster" for the men as they worked, and his tireless labor and direction served as inspiration for all the members of the church. Many nights the fellows gathered at the church site and worked in weather that was near freezing, but nothing could cool the fervor of those who wanted to have a place of worship for their group! On December 14, 1958 Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Hale of Grace Church presented a beautiful pulpit bible to the church in the

honor of Mrs. A. F. Grimstead, Sr., a charter member of the church. The charter membership of the church was closed on January 4, 1959 with 51 charter members. Plans were made to have the sanctuary completed for the week of evangelism to be held on March 8th-15th by the Rev. Thomas A. Collins.

It was necessary to borrow \$2,000.00 from a local bank in order to finance some hired labor and purchase materials to complete the building. A great deal of credit goes to the Building Committee of the church; Mr. N. W. Bond, Mr. Ralph Bordeaux, Mr. Allen Grimstead, Jr., Mr. N. C. Littlejohn, Sr., and Mr. M. B. Jordan, these men labored long and hard drawing up and laying plans for the construction of the church. Mr. Bond did all of the wiring for the church. Mr. Littlejohn and Mr. Jordan donated a large amount of materials to the church. But there were many contributions of money and material that came from outside of the church. There is no doubt but that the faith and courage of the small group of Methodists had been caught by some of the people in the community.

With a present church membership of 53 and a Sunday School enrollment of 70, there is no doubt in the minds of the church people that the church will continue to grow and flourish. With the church not yet a year old the members of the fellowship are looking forward to several special events; Easter Sunday, the anniversary of the fellowship's first worship together, and "Opening Service" on April 12th, and then on the 7th of June an observance of the day of organization. There is no doubt in the minds and hearts of the people of Wrightsboro Methodist church about the continued growth and expansion of the church, it is only a matter of time and continual dedication to the cause of missions and the primary purpose of the church - to win the lost into the fellowship of the redeemed! Of the 53 members of the church, 4 have come in by Profession of Faith, 6 from other denominations, and the rest from Methodist churches by transfer.

With a church building covering around 2500 square feet and valued at around \$12,000.00, the church has physical evidence of the faith of the people. It is our prayer that the good Lord will continue to increase our faith and keep our aims high that in the months to come He may bless the laborers of Wrightsboro Methodist Church.

The story of the church has a beginning, but there is no ending in that the end is only in the Lord in whom there is no end.

Today we have a new Educational Bldg. and Sanctuary valued at \$45,000.00. The membership at this time is 143 on the church roll and the Church School membership is 133. We have an average of 90 in church school and the worship service is somewhat larger than this. We owe around \$25,000.00 on the total debt of the church for all property. Our Parsonage is located at 122 Chadwick Avenue about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the Church Building.

Sincerely
C. E. Price Jr.