



## A booklet celebrating the new sanctuary, Signal Hill UMC, Belleville

(note: the church had an East St. Louis address in the mid-1960's and was "Methodist" until the 1968 merger to "United Methodist")



### (A reproduction of the first three pages of the booklet) In the beginning...

"Charles, we ought to have a Sunday School here on Signal Hill."

"Maybe you're right, Carr. More and more people are moving out here and it is a long way to the nearest church."

This casual conversation took place on Signal Hill Boulevard on a summer day in 1910 between Carr Smith and Charles W. Holnback. Before it was concluded, they had decided to start a Sunday School the following Sunday and wrote invitations on the sidewalks with chalk.



On that first Sunday, seven boys came and class was held under the shade trees in back of old Signal Hill School. What began with a friendly chat turned into a project of intense concern. Each week more came, then some adults joined the group and classes were formed.

When cooler weather came the little group obtained permission to meet in the fourth grade room of the school. Carr Smith was Sunday School Superintendent for the first six years. Those working with him included Samuel Boucher, Mrs. George L. Kiefer, Helen Thompson, Jennie Reese (now McCurdy), Ruth Skellet, Delphine Wallace (Lenny), Fanny Hogg, Mr. and Mrs. Brnggs, and R. J. Stemm.

Very quickly the need was seen for a church. Arrangements were made with McKendree college and soon the first student pastor, Robert M. Peters, was holding regular services in the school. Late in 1911 Mr. Holnback purchased the present site of the church and donated the land to the congregation. Plans were made for constructing a place of worship for this infant congregation.

In December 1913 the basement was completed and the first services were held on Christmas Day. There followed long months of work to pay for the basement and to raise money to erect the top part of the building. Successful projects included selling sandwiches and coffee at the cemetery on Decoration Day and selling fried doughnuts to everyone, everywhere. The women

sometimes worked from 6 am to 6 pm frying doughnuts over coal fires. Occasionally suppers were held and considered a great success if they resulted in \$10 profit.

Building plans moved ahead and finally on June 20, 1926 the church was dedicated in the form seen in this photo. The Rev. J. B. Cummins was pastor at the time. Indebtedness on the new building was \$15,000 and was paid off in 1944.

Signal Hill Methodist Church first appeared in the minutes of the Southern Illinois Annual Conference in 1916. Although first organized as a community church, the church was supplied with Methodist ministerial students from McKendree College and thus voted to become a Methodist Church. In that first record of 1916, 59 members were reported and Sunday School enrollment was 67. When the new building was occupied in 1926 membership had doubled to 124.

### **The First Big Expansion...**

In 1919 the first parsonage was built, a small frame house which stood on the site of the new sanctuary.

The area and the church continued to grow. Better educational facilities were needed to keep up with improved teaching methods. Dr. Harry C. Brown was appointed Pastor at Signal Hill in 1944 and during his pastorate plans were made for building an educational addition. In October 1951 a campaign for pledges resulted in over \$50,000 and construction was begun. Dr. Harrold E. McCann was chairman of the Building Committee, J. Miles Gilbert was employed as architect and the contract was let to Robert Behrman.

The cornerstone was laid in 1952 when the Rev. Edgar Purdy was pastor. Final completion of the project came in 1954 during the pastorate of Dr. Omer F. Whitlock. The Quarterly Conference had authorized the church to borrow a maximum of \$25,000 but receipts were such that only \$17,775 was borrowed. This was paid off in two years in spite of the fact that the church budget was approximately 100 per cent larger than in 1953. Total cost of the educational building and equipment was around \$80,000.

With the debt paid, the educational building was dedicated by Bishop Charles W. Brashares on March 10, 1957.

In 1952, when the educational building was started a Long Range Planning Committee was established to study the future expansion needs of our church.

In 1956 the property at 2 Signal Hill Blvd. became available and the Long Range Planning Committee recommended its purchase, not only to provide more adequate housing for the minister and family, but to free part of our site for future building. The present parsonage was thus purchased for \$25,000. This was paid for in approximately four years.

Another major chapter began when the Quarterly Conference of April 6, 1960 authorized and elected a Building



Committee charged “to proceed with investigation into the need for additional facilities for worship, education, and fellowship, and to take the natural steps necessary to bring plans and recommendations to the congregation for their approval.”

### **The Long Dreamed of Sanctuary...**

With Edward S. Bott as chairman the Building Committee engaged Kenneth E. Wischmeyer as architect. There followed many months of study of our needs by the Building Committee and various sub-committees. A basic proposal for a new sanctuary, fellowship hall, and additional educational and administrative space was approved by the congregation March 31, 1963. A fund raising drive was conducted in the three months following in which pledges totaling \$151,000 were made to be paid over a three year period. To this was added \$30,000 that had been set aside over a period of years and several subsequent special gifts which brought the total subscribed or available to approximately \$210,000.

In July of 1964 the congregation voted final approval and the general contract was awarded to Wimmer Construction Company. A ground-breaking ceremony was held on July 12 and construction began soon after. In this phase was included a sanctuary seating 430, a fellowship hall seating 250 at tables, a library, rest room facilities, and heating and air conditioning to service both the new construction and the section that was built in 1926. The sanctuary will include a twenty-two rank Reuter organ provided for in the will of Commodore Carr and a bell tower given in memory of Walter Bowman.

Total cost of the project will be approximately \$510,000 and indebtedness when we occupy the new premises is expected to be \$320,000.

### **MINISTERS OF SIGNAL HILL METHODIST CHURCH**

Robert M. Peters	1910
Eli Crouse	
....Billings	
R.A. Reeves	1916-17
....Blankenship	
C.A. McNamara	1917-18
P.E. Blakney	1918-19
Merritt A. Souers	1919-20
Mrs. Adah M. Hagler	1920-22
R. M. Van Treese	1922-23
Roy Kean	1923
J. B. Cummins	1924-27
L G. Beers	1927-32
H.S. French	1932-38
H.E. Sorter	1938-44
Harry C. Brown	1944-52
Edgar B. Purdy	1952-54
Omer F. Whitlock	1954-59
Robert W. Gordon	1959-

