

Some Historical Highlights of the Pittman Park United Methodist Church, Statesboro, Georgia, founded June 17, 1956.

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It would take a book - a big book - to give you all the early details about the birth of Pittman Park. This information made wiser District Superintendents and astounded the Bishops. We had already been told by Bishop Arthur Moore that we would have to be self-supporting and a church with a mission. This we already knew. But out of all of it, Pittman Park became a great church and so did First Methodist. I have talked with ministers and Bishops throughout the Jurisdiction and there has never been anything like it in Methodism.

When we polled each of our prospective members by a slip of paper to test our financial strength for an annual budget, we came up with some \$30,000, and by the end of the first year we had pledges paid of \$41,000. By the way, the preacher's salary was \$6,000. There were many of us who signed those pledge slips who even surprised ourselves by being able to meet them. There was sacrifice and there was love and joy in the giving.

After a short time of organization, we were privileged to have our church school and worship services at the Marvin Pittman School. Our attendance was almost perfect. If someone missed a service, he/she was deluged with telephone calls to find out who was ill. If someone stumped his/her toe, Pittman Parkers rallied to him/her. We were a closely knit group.

Before the ground breaking, there was a sign erected on the property which read, "Building for the Glory of God." Then came the trip to Atlanta. Our representatives appeared before the loan commission of the Teachers' Retirement Fund to secure a loan of \$190,000 to build a portion of the facilities. The chairman of the Commission came out of the meeting and informed us that they were not going to lend us the \$190,000, but they were going to let us have \$267,000 to complete the church. It was a thrilling experience to watch the construction. Many mornings after midnight, someone would call me and ask if I were awake. Believe it or not, I was awake. We were all excited. What a thrill every minute of the day.

I believe the church here is accomplishing a big part of its mission--

- 1) To minister to the students and faculty of Georgia Southern and to newcomers in Statesboro
- 2) To use the great abundance of leadership offered by the young members of the church
- 3) To be a church of vision and world concern. Here I want to back-track a bit and tell you about a great crisis we faced when integration came. This was a tremendous issue to face twenty years ago. Many churches had adopted resolutions to close their doors to blacks, and we were divided in our thinking. But we reasoned that our Discipline wouldn't permit a closed door policy and we paddled a straight course and kept the doors open to everyone.

We have always been a church with world concern. I can't remember a year when there has not been an allocation in our budget for foreign missions. This will continue to be a big part of our course.

Well, this is a brief recap of it all. There are some things we need to do:-

- 1) We need to recapture the joy of sacrificial giving
- 2) The love and concern of our fellow church members. (I hardly know one-fourth of them. Isn't that terrible?)
- 3) The thrill of being in God's house.

Someone has asked me, "How do you recapture these things?" I replied, "I think we need to pray the prayer of the psalmist - 'Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation'."

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W. M. Adams