Rev. Ester Hammond came to Church Point in June of 1987 to serve as pastor of the United Methodist Church of Church Point. In June of 1988 she was re-assigned to serve as the pastor for another year. She came to Church Point after serving for six years as a missionary in Liberia, West Africa. Although not in a foreign land, she still serves as a missionary, not only pastoring the local Methodist Church, but also the Methodist Church in Ville Platte and the Church in Maxie, located near Iota. The native of Bogalusa, La., who resides in Hammond for 20 years, began her studies to enter the ministry in 1970. After her husband, who was organist and choir director of the Methodist Church for 28 years, passed away in 1972 she entered Southeastern State University in Hammond. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Southeastern in May of 1976. She continued her studies entering Southern Methodist University in Dallas to acquire a Masters in Theology. After graduation Rev. Hammond was ordained as an Elder in Fill Connection in the Methodist Church. This was her goal when entering the ministry.

While at SMU she did in internship as a missionary for a year under the SMU Perkins Program. She had enjoyed this work so much that she decided to become a missionary. Her reason for returning to the states, she stated, was because of her health. She would still be doing missionary work, but after contacting malaria, with recurrences of the illness, she had to give up her life as a missionary. Malaria is still one of the causes of deaths among the people of Liberia. No matter what one goes into the hospital for they are always given shots for malaria.

Missionary work in Liberia for Rev. Hammond began in June of 1981. During her six years as a missionary she taught English, the Old Testament, and doctrine at the Profession Gbarnga School of Theology. She taught English, the Old Testament, politics and Doctorate along with preaching. At the School of Theology they trained pastors for the Methodist, Lutheran and Episcopal Churches. The students were Liberians, only a few from other countries in Africa attended the school. The school was taught in the English language. The young people of Liberia learn the English Language in the schools. When the missionaries went out to preach they had to have an interpreter.

In addition to teaching, Rev. Hammond was treasurer for the school, registrar and admission chairperson. The tiny lady went to Liberia all alone to do God’s work. Although there were other missionaries there, she was expected to take care of herself. Rev. Hammond said she traveled alone to preach on weekends with no problems, one would think this would have been to dangerous. She stated that the Liberian people respected older people.

One of the biggest problems in Liberia were the
AMMOND rogues (thieves)”, Rev. Hammond stated. They would not hurt anyone but would steal everything they could get their hands on. The houses had bars on the windows like jails. No one knew who the rogues were. This was a constant problem. When she returned to the states she had to re-adjust after living behind bars for so long.

She has had many experiences to tell about her stay in Liberia.

The weather was hot at all times with Liberia being located on the equator. It was a dry heat, although they did have a rainy season with the temperature going down to 75 degrees, which was cool for the people.

A power plant in the nearby city could have provided electricity but it was hardly ever in working order. “Maybe a half dozen times during the six years I was there did it work”, Rev. Hammond stated. They had no electric lights, used kerosene lamps, kerosene refrigerators, had no washing machines, washing was done on a scrub board. The water was impure, a special filter had to be used for drinking water.

Rev. Hammond recalls that the greatest thing for her when she returned to the states was being able to go to the kitchen sink and turn on the faucet for a glass of clean water, fresh milk and a washing machine.

There are many more stories to be told about her missionary work Rev. Hammond said. She has shown slides to her parishioners on the work she did and on the people of Liberia.

During her stay in Liberia Rev. Hammond returned home several times to visit with her sons and their families. Rev. Hammond has three sons, Herbert who with his wife and children reside in Colorado. He will soon retire from serving 20 years in the Army. Randy and his wife with their children and another son, Derwin with his wife and child reside in Bogalusa. Rev. Hammond has seven grandchildren and one great grandchild.

She was hesitant on beginning her studies in the ministry but has a message to older people, “no one is ever too old to return to school and fulfill their desires in life.”

The parishioners of the Church are fortunate to have for their pastor such a devote Christian to lead the church. “Rev. Hammond, we are also happy to have you in our community”. 