Building, Expansion Highlight 1962

Story of Protestant Churches Here

The dominant story among the Protestant Churches of Lafayette last year was one of building and expansion. New church buildings, additions, and plans for new churches and additions were sparked by the rapidly growing population of the city, the expansion of the oil industry, and the influx of a new and largely Protestant group, mainly from Texas and Oklahoma.

No less than four new churches were completed last year — First Lutheran, Trinity Lutheran, Assembly of God, and Grace Presbyterian — and others — Asbury Methodist, Emanuel Baptist, and First Presbyterian — were either expanded or have plans for building in the near future.

Emmanuel Baptist Church was founded in 1955 with 67 members, and has been building ever since. Four of the projected five units are now complete.

The first was an educational unit built during the pastorate of the Rev. G. Roger Woodall, original minister of the church. It was built on property purchased by the early congregation on the Abbeville Highway, and now valued at $300,000. The unit is at the present time used for Sunday School classes.

Most recent is the fourth unit, also educational. It is a two-story structure, and was completed last April at a cost of $200,000. It consists of 20 classrooms and an assembly area. The architect was Elwood Reams, Lake Charles, and Weil Construction Co., Lafayette, was the contractor.

The church, now numbering 600, is planning the fifth unit, which will include a sanctuary, for construction in about three years. Groundbreaking ceremonies should take place sometime in 1963 according to the pastor, the Rev. B. T. Scrivener.

The construction of a new $61,000 plant was begun by members of the First Lutheran Church, United Lutheran Church in America, in July, 1961. The new building dramatized the rapid growth of the congregation, which was organized in February, 1954, with 22 people, and now has a membership of 207, of which 116 are confirmed.

The new building is the first permanent home for the Lutheran congregation. Upon organization and until 1958, the small group of worshippers used First Christian Church property on West University. Finally, a "house chapel" was purchased, located at North Acadia and South College Road.

From December, 1959, to November, 1961, religious services took place in the Baptist Student Center on the USL campus.

The Rev. Norman H. Suhr came to Lafayette as pastor of the congregation in March, 1959, and the following July, the land for the new building was purchased for $17,000.

Dedication of the new plant on Pelecie Drive took place in January of last year.

The sanctuary has a seating capacity of 134. With its nine Sunday School classrooms and one office, the entire plant occupies 1,610ths acres of land. The brick, air-conditioned structure was designed by Elwood Reams, and the contractor was J. P. Van Way, Lafayette.

Trinity Lutheran Church, associated with the Missouri Synod, built a new church and student center in 1961, 'based on the growing needs of the congregation as well as the spiritual needs of the Lutheran students at the University of Southwestern Louisiana," according to the former pastor, the Rev. John R. Saeger.

The expansion and relocation program for the Trinity parish was begun in 1957. The Rev. O. H. Southern District, made a study of Reinoth, mission executive of the the Lafayette area in 1959, and the site selected was purchased in June, 1960.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on the new site on March 19, 1961. Dedication services were on October 1, 1961.

The chapel, a modern octagonal-shaped building seating 150, and the high-crossed roof were designed by Ernest E. Verges, New Orleans. The use of laminated wood arches and beams combined with the low brick wall and cathedral glass above completely encircled the interior.

The total cost of Trinity's new facilities, not including the furnishings, was $75,000.

The newly built Grace Presbyterian church is the first permanent house of worship for the congregation, which was organized as recently as January, 1961.

Starting with 116 members, the pulpit was first supplied by the Rev. Lynwood Cheshire of Baton Rouge, who is formerly secretary of the Louisiana Presbyterian. Services were first held in the War Memorial Building.

By the time the Rev. Dr. Archie C. Ray assumed the duties of pastor on Easter Sunday, 1961, 31 acres of land had been bought on Roselawn Boulevard at a cost of $40,000. The land had been purchased by the State Presbyterian the previous February.

The initial services were held in the new building on Easter Sunday of last year. The building includes a fellowship hall seating approximately 280, a pastor's study, and 10 Sunday School classrooms. These were built at a cost of $165,000, including the furnishings.

Membership at the time of the first service in the new building numbered 268, with about 300 registered in the Sunday School.

A second educational building providing six classrooms and two offices is planned for this year. The master plan calls for a third educational building and a sanctuary.

The architect is Robert L. Stephan, and the contractor is Horace Rickey Jr., Richard Traxler, and George Brown, to consider plans for a building and expansion program on the present site.

In March, 1962, David L. Perkins was commissioned the architect to submit preliminary plans. He prepared a scale model, and the congregation, on September 16, approved the building program and plans.

The entire program is slated to cost $350,000. In the plans are a new sanctuary, a fellowship hall, an additional Sunday School space for both youth and adult departments, administrative offices, and a small chapel.

The building will be designed for strength and beauty, and should be able to accommodate 1,000 without serious crowding, according to the pastor, the Rev. T. F. Wallace.

It is expected that construction will start in the latter part of the year, and the new facilities should be ready for occupancy by the middle of 1964.

Asbury Methodist Church has expanded its Sunday School enrollment by 35 percent since last April, when the Rev. C. R. McCammon came to Lafayette as pastor of the church.

Last April was the date of the completion of the new educational building.

The plant is of modern design, and cost $75,000. It is located at 106 Colee Road. The educational center makes available to the congregation two nurseries, a choir room, two primary rooms, six junior departments, a church office and a pastor's study. Membership of the Sunday School is now approximately 420.

Plans are in the works for the building of a sanctuary.