



CAMPHOR MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (An Historical Perspective)

Prior to 1917, there was no Methodist church in Scotlandville, just a group of dedicated individuals who would walk to Thompson Chapel in Baker, Louisiana each Sunday morning to attend services. In 1917, they decided to bring Methodism to Scotlandville, and began meeting in the home of James and Mary Bradford at 1041 Marsh Street.

Shortly after making this decision, the group decided to seek the guidance of the late Rev. Amos M. Taylor, pastor of Thompson Chapel in Baker, in their quest for a church. Rev. Taylor and the late Rev. J. A. Landry, the District Superintendent, began visiting the community and meeting with the group, which included Bertrand Cook, Ada Hansberry, William and Mary Haynes, Willie and Mary D. Haynes, Jordan and Emma Haynes, and Ernest and Teasty Kelly. These meetings resulted in the appointment of officers by the District Superintendent, designating the first Trustee Board and other church leaders. James Bradford was appointed the president of the Trustee Board, with Bertrand Cook as secretary, and William D. Haynes, Jordan H. Haynes, Willie S. Haynes, and Ernest Kelly as members of the board. William D. Haynes was appointed to the position of Sunday School Superintendent. Other members joining the church at this time were Edna F. Kelly, Elnora Evans, Lou Douglas, Henry and Melinda Coston, and Hartzell and Beatrice Bradford. As the congregation grew, worship services were moved to the Odd Fellows Hall located behind Sewell's Variety Store. Rev. Taylor served as the first pastor (1918-1922), and W. P. Thirkield was serving as the conference bishop.

Soon after the organization of the church, it was learned that a real estate company was donating property to various denominations. The officers contacted the agent and were given a lot on Stilt Street where a frame building was erected with Minus Fields, John Douglas, and Ernest Woodard hauling the first load of lumber from Faunbaucher Lumber Company. To help finance the building of the church, a Stake Drive was held. Each person who drove a stake paid \$1.00. Wallace L. Bradford, the son of the president of the Trustee Board, drove the first stake in the absence of his father. The church was named Taylor Methodist Episcopal Church. Several years later, through the efforts of the District Superintendent and the pastor, a donation of \$500 was made to the church by the Board of Missions. During those early years, Bishop Thirkield visited the church, encouraged the members and donated the first organ and some lights.

The present site (three lots) was purchased by the General Church for \$1000, and a donation of \$2,300 was made for a parsonage. In 1922, under the direction of the District Superintendent, the late Rev. Walter Scott Chinn, the church building was rolled from Stilt Street to the corner of Scenic Highway and Teal Street. At that same time, the name was changed to Camphor Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, the second official name of the church, in honor of Bishop A. P. Camphor. The late Rev. O. W. Obee (1922-1924) was appointed pastor, followed by the late Rev. Robert Wilkens (1924-1926).

During the pastorate of the late Rev. George W. Carter, Jr. (1926-1929), the idea of a new building was conceived, and a total of \$185.00 was raised. Fundraising continued under the leadership of Rev. R. J. Johnson (1929-1931) and, six years later, the idea materialized when the church was rebuilt from the floor under the pastorate of Rev. Leroy Fields (1931-1936). Pews built by Robert





Shade replaced the folding chairs. Two rooms were added under the direction of Rev. S. C. Walker (1938-1942), and changes were made in the chancel at a cost of \$1300. The first pulpit furniture was purchased during the pastorate of Rev. R. W. Calvin (1942-1947) at a cost of \$500.

A building fund was begun during the leadership of the late Rev. James A. Williams (1947-1950), when \$958 was raised through the Spring Festival sponsored by the Senior Choir. This fund continued to grow for approximately ten years, under the leaderships of the late Rev. L. H. P. Norris (1950-1954), Rev. Arthur Robinson (1954-1957), and Rev. Carl Wethers (1957-1961). The first plans for the present building were outlined by Rev. Robinson and added to by Rev. Wethers. The building Camphor's members worship in today was erected in 1959 at a total cost of \$117,000.

Following the pastorate of Rev. Wethers, Rev. J. D. McCrory (1951-1963) and Rev. Samuel W. Walker (1963-1969) served the congregation. Under the leadership of Rev. Walker, more than \$22,000 was raised and applied to the mortgage, which was liquidated on November 6, 1965. That same month, property for a parking lot was purchased at a cost of \$10,500. The dedication service was held on January 30, 1966.

In 1969, Rev. George W. C. Calvin (1969-1986) came to Camphor. Under his leadership the church was given a physical uplift. The roof was repaired, and electrical wiring in the ceiling brought up to standard. In addition, the interior of the church was repainted, floors were re-carpeted, pews were cushioned, a new piano was obtained, and property adjacent to the church on the north was purchased.

In June, 1986, Dr. Moses T. Jackson, Sr. (1986-1992), former District Superintendent of the Baton Rouge-Lafayette District, was appointed pastor. Under his leadership, substantial additions and renovations were made to the church. Lloyd Hinton, contractor, was authorized to begin renovating the church structure on May 11, 1989. At a cost of \$363,000, the choir and pulpit areas were renovated, a new Fellowship Hall constructed, classrooms, bathrooms, a library, and a first aid room were added. Offices for the pastor and secretary were relocated, and the vacant rooms converted into a lounge. A new parking area was paved and the existing parking lot was overlaid. The new structure was consecrated by Bishop William B. Ode, Resident Bishop of the Louisiana Conference, on Sunday, February 11, 1990.

Rev. Roger D. Lathan (1992-2002) came to Camphor from the staff of the Conference Council on Ministries on June 7, 1992. Under his leadership, Camphor continued its spiritual enrichment activities, community outreach and maintenance of a strong financial base. Properties on the corner of Stilt Street and Scenic Highway and Booker Street and Teal Street, totaling \$63,500, were purchased, and the Bell Tower built. In addition, air conditioning and heating passages in the sanctuary were re-vented and renovations made in the chancel area. Stained glass windows were donated by Dr. Marilyn Ray in memory of her great-grandparents and grandparents, who were among the church founders, and her parents. Camphor's first associate pastor, Rev. Elaine Smith (1998-2004), was appointed.

Camphor's nineteenth pastor was Rev. Darlene A. Moore (2002-2011). Under her leadership, prayer groups were strengthened, community outreach continued, and partnerships were developed with the Louisiana Coalition of African American Breast Cancer Survivors and the Baton Rouge





Recreation Commission. The latter partnership established the BREC/Camphor Handbell Choir. church van was purchased, and an outdoor marquis, donated by Minnie and Angela Thomas in memory of their husband and father, was installed in October, 2005. The sanctuary was refurbished, including refinishing the pews and lecterns, choir chairs, and installation of new carpeting throughout the sanctuary in March, 2007. Camphor's second associate pastor, Rev. Mary Ann Robinson (2005-2016), was appointed.

In October, 2009, Camphor's sanctuary caught fire. The congregation was displaced for months, holding services at Hall Davis & Sons Funeral Home. The repairs were completed in July, 2010, and the congregation returned. That same year, the Outreach Center was opened. Tutoring, food and clothing distribution, community meetings, and Sunday school classes are offered in this building to help meet the needs of the Scotlandville Community. Camphor also provides services/assistance to the Daughters of Naomi, Sisters Supporting Sisters, The Scotland Historical Society, Morehouse School of Medicine Project, Together Baton Rouge, and the Holy Grill through its outreach programs.

Rev. Clifton Conrad (2011-present) came to be Camphor's twentieth pastor. He continues to build on the foundation established that cold winter Sunday in 1917. Under his leadership, the Camphor Academy provides experiences for spiritual growth and development. Stained glass windows were donated in memory of Norma Bradford Brown, Hartzel, Beatrice, James and Evelyn Bradford by their families. Camphor's third associate pastor, Rev. Tiffany Postell (2016-present), was appointed with a two point charge, Camphor and the Southern University Wesley Foundation.

