

## Progress

Four hundred and thirty-nine church members awaited Frank George Voight, Jr., when he came on March 1, 1949, as Oakwood's eighth pastor. His training was completed at The Southern Theological Seminary, but he returned to the Louisville, Kentucky school to receive his Doctorate at commencement time.

Shortly before he preached his trial sermon, the Board of Deacons began serious deliberation of the parsonage problem. The apartment over Friendship Corner was judged not suitable for the purpose and several prospective pastors indicated that they could not accept the arrangement if they received a call to the church. The deacons agreed, however, that the church should not purchase a house unless satisfactory disposition could be made of Friendship Corner. They were also aware that the church was violating new city zoning laws by using the downstairs rooms for Sunday school classes and that most of the teen-agers had recently shown little interest in the recreation center.

Serious consideration was given to renting the apartment, but when the opportunity came during the following summer, Friendship Corner was sold. In the meantime in April a committee of deacons found a three bedroom brick house at 600 North 39<sup>th</sup> Street which the church purchased for \$11,000. Members paid for the new parsonage within three years. Dr. Voight returned to Louisville for the birth of his first child and for his degree and subsequently traded his summer vacation period for redecoration of the house, electrical service for a washing machine, and two loads of topsoil. But the church later surprised him with time off for a Christmas visit home.

The Young Men's Bible Class had no difficulty in moving back into the church basement, but a nursery in the church had to be provided. Dr. Voight suggested that three small rooms on the balcony above the back of the sanctuary might serve. Accordingly, all partitions and doors were removed and a plate glass picture window was installed so that workers could look down upon the pulpit. Inasmuch as the choir sat behind the pulpit, new mother Dot Voight's sweet soprano voice became a full time asset to the services, and at the same time she could keep her eye on baby Marianne. Soundproofing, a germicidal lamp, baby beds, a playpen, a rest room, and a speaker system for bringing the sermon to the workers completed the nursery. The facility served as a model for other churches.

Within four months of Dr. Voight's arrival thirty-five members were added to the church, and an installation service for Sunday school officers was arranged. By year's end the sanctuary was redecorated; the pulpit, aisles, and vestibule received new carpet; handrails were installed on the front entrance steps; and the choir completed a successful fund raising drive to pay for a chime attachment

for the organ. Because of his excellence and dedication the church bestowed the title of Minister of Music on its organist-director, James S. Taylor.

The year 1950 brought appointment of the first Visual Education Committee for Oakwood Church and the purchase of a movie projector. A modified version of a unified budget was scheduled for tryout.

But the year also brought eight deaths among the membership, a larger than usual number. Among them were those of Norman Luther Flippen, Oakwood's first and, until that time, only clerk; and Miss Lottie Dickenson, the lady who started it all by arranging for a tent meeting in 1915. The Men's Bible Class of which he was then teacher was renamed in Mr. Flippen's memory while the T.E.L. Class, which she had previously taught, was renamed in memory of Miss Dickenson.

In November 1950 the congregation decided to hold a joint Thanksgiving Day service with nearby Branch Memorial Methodist Church. The first such service was held at Oakwood with the Branch Memorial pastor bringing the message. In mid-service the congregation saw a haze developing around the pulpit, but the visiting minister did not notice the smoke until a giant puff billowed up. Dr. Voight and Deacon T. Lindsay Clayton scrambled to disconnect the new public address system. With the emergency ended the guest minister resumed his sermon by ad libbing, "I have known it to be true for a long time, but this is the first definite example that I've seen that it takes a Methodist sermon to set a Baptist church on fire."

At the annual meeting in January 1951 Dr. Voight reported, "The State of the Union is still good. We are making progress . . . but there are some weak spots to be strengthened." Choir and baptismal robes were purchased that year; the young men formed a softball team; and a hailstorm broke much window glass throughout the building.

Members of the congregation were turning out in such large numbers for Sunday morning services that for over a year it was necessary to move chairs from classrooms into several rows on the balcony each Sabbath Day and frequently to open the adjoining Sunday school rooms for the overflow. Additional chairs were consequently purchased and speakers were added to the second floor Junior and Intermediate department spaces. The deacons and Finance Committee began to think of adding an additional wing to the facility, but this was not to be. Dr. Voight resigned on October 1, 1951, to accept a pastorate in Roanoke, Virginia and subsequently to become Sunday School Secretary for the Virginia Baptist Board of Missions and Education. At Oakwood he left five hundred and two members.