

GUMPER

Dollgener resigned effective December 1, 1964 to become assistant pastor at New Braunfels. A number of ministers were called upon to fill the pulpit until the last of January when the new pastor, Elmer Gumper, arrived with his wife Esther, former missionaries from Honduras. They were both devout gardeners turning the parsonage yard into a beautiful flower garden. This interest of the pastor motivated the Confirmation Class to plant live oak trees on either side of the street in front of the church.

Gumper combined a personal pietistic emphasis with a broader concern for social justice. He organized the congregation into small groups called "house churches" for study, discussion, prayer and other faith strengthening purposes. On the broader front in the January meeting of 1967 he urged the members of the congregation to use their influence to bring about a disengagement of U. S. forces in Vietnam. Later that same year he promoted a special offering for Palestine refugee victims of the six day war in the Middle East.

Plans to celebrate the 75th Anniversary were begun early in order to include a major re-decorating program for the Sanctuary under the chairmanship of Vi Kreidel. William Ratliff of Austin was the architect. One of the recommended changes which created quite a turbulence in the congregation, was the suggestion to suspend a large cross over a free standing communion table with a dossal curtain to replace the painting on the wall. To resolve the conflict created by this proposal a special, off-the-record congregational meeting was called to give all the members a chance to vent their feelings and share their thoughts. The result was a compromise plan leaving the altar and painting intact and adopting the other recommended designs-hemp fabric for the walls, a facade behind the altar and paneling in the chancel area.

JOHNSON

Gumper resigned in the spring of 1968 and like Dollgener before him became assistant pastor of the church in New Braunfels. Dr. Jesse Wilson of Austin was called to serve the church during the interim. When the pulpit committee learned that their former pastor Jewel Johnson of Dallas was available for a call to a less urban setting, they asked him to return for a second "tour of duty" at Coupland. On the first weekend in August while vacationing at Lake Travis, he slipped off from his friends, the Bob Seiberts to return to Coupland to conduct a guest service. Following the benediction John Thompson called the meeting to order and the vote was 159 to 3 to call Johnson back to Coupland.

The renovation plans for the sanctuary were carried out during the spring and summer of 1969, and on November 2 a full house of 430 persons gathered at the anniversary celebration.

An endowment fund begun years ago by A. M. Pfluger was expanded to move toward a perpetual care arrangement for the cemetery. A new set of regulations for the cemetery was adopted which called for lower stone monuments and more mesquite grass.

In 1970 the Men's Brotherhood made a study of housing in the Coupland area. They found dozens of old but solid usable vacant houses and weed lots in and around the village. They engaged in an informal public relations program which encouraged the selling of abandoned property, the rehabilitation and selling or renting of abandoned houses, and the building of new homes to provide for low cost housing in the area.

Within four years several new homes were built. All the vacant houses in the village and many outside were rehabilitated and occupied. The abandoned drug store became a popular weekend eating place. The abandoned hardware store became the Coupland Tavern. The population of the village itself jumped from about 140 in 1970 to 190 in 1974.

Many of the new people who moved into the area found that St. Peters' open and inclusive policy gave them an opportunity to worship and serve the Lord in this place among this people. Some examples are Wayne Brown, who serves as treasurer of the church council; Jeanne Taliaferro, the choir director; Stella Taliaferro, the president of the Youth Fellowship; John Reavis, the Sunday School superintendent; and Zada Downing, a Sunday School teacher to mention only a few.