

## **The History of Cowan Fellowship Church**

By L. Jarod Pearson



Cowan Fellowship Church is a federated congregation of the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Cowan Methodist Church was founded in 1947 and located in a historic facility on Poplar Street known as the "Old Army Chapel". Cowan Presbyterian Church was founded in 1907 and was located in a historic brick facility on East Cowan Street. In 1962 the Methodist and Presbyterian congregations were struggling to stay viable as Cowan's population started a long, slow decline. A feasibility study sponsored by both churches investigated the possibility of the two congregations coming under one roof as a federated church with shared leadership.

The results of the study were presented in final draft on June 17, 1962 and both congregations voted overwhelmingly to pursue unification. The proposal was taken before the Executive Presbyter of the Nashville Presbytery and also before the Bishop and Superintendent of the Methodist Conference. All parties agreed that a federated church was a workable idea as long as both congregations maintained their unique affiliation and identity. The name Cowan Fellowship was suggested by the Methodist Bishop and was ultimately adopted as the name of the new church.

The federated congregation met in the Presbyterian building while using the Methodist building for youth activities. In 1966 the Presbyterian building was sold to a Church of God congregation. A building committee, formed in 1967, raised funds and put together plans for a modern new facility on East Cumberland Street using a piece of property donated by Mr. Glenn Hines. The new facility was completed in 1969.

The building features a 200-seat sanctuary, an education unit that doubles as a fellowship hall (with kitchen), two choir rooms that double as classrooms, an infant room and a pastor's study. The church's debt on the new building was retired in very short time.

Cowan Fellowship is one of very few Presbyterian/Methodist federated congregations operating to this day and stands as a model for cooperative ministry in a small town setting.

*Information for this article was gathered from the writings of Jim and Jenny Lou Brock, Emeline Gist, and Mrs. Violet Wakeland.*

