

# Church Founder Dies



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Published 8:22 pm Monday, January 5, 2015

The founder of one of Suffolk's largest churches now is rejoicing in the heavenly church after passing away on Friday.

Bishop William P. Wiggins Sr., 85, grew New Mount Joy Food For Living Ministry out of a lunch-hour Bible study that he started at Planters Peanuts, where he worked as a young man.

"He was very dedicated and committed to the work of the Lord," said his daughter, Brenda Knight. "We're sort of rejoicing, because he's out of labor and he's at peace."



Bishop William P. Wiggins Sr., pictured on the left with his wife, Lula Wiggins, during a 2010 interview, died Friday. He founded New Mount Joy Food For Living Ministries from a Bible study he was leading at Planters Peanuts when he worked there.

According to Wiggins in a 2010 interview, he started reading the Bible and praying during his lunch hour at Planters. The group of about 15 or 20 met outside for some time before Planters founder Amedeo Obici found out about it and gave them a space inside to conduct their Bible study.

So respected was Wiggins in the factory that workers who had been suspended for misbehavior were required to attend his Bible study before they were allowed back on the job, according to that 2010 interview.

Out of that weekday group grew a church that met on Sundays. There were eight original members, all of whom Wiggins and his wife, Lula, picked up in the family's station wagon to attend services.

The church met in private homes until it reached its final destination on County Street. In 1978, Wiggins left Planters to lead the church full-time. In 1983, the church constructed a new building.

The Wigginses sacrificed a lot to make the church work. Lula Wiggins sewed her children's clothes herself; the couple saved to add an extra room onto their home but then decided the church needed the money more.

Now with about 800 members, the church continues to draw parishioners in through its various ministries, including a youth ministry, a Bible institute named after Wiggins, a foodbank, ministries for those recovering from substance abuse and more.

Wiggins turned over the pulpit at New Mount Joy in 2009 to Dr. Viola Parker.

Wiggins is survived by his wife, with whom he just celebrated 62 years of marriage in November; three daughters and one son; five grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

"He was very dedicated and committed to the work of the Lord," Knight said. "We knew he was a man of God."

His son and a granddaughter also have become ministers, Knight said.

"I felt like he left his legacy," she said. "The work is going to go on."

"He always said, 'My business is soul business,'" Knight added. "He said, 'I've got to do what the Lord told me to do.'"

Service times for later this week have yet to be announced.