

THE HISTORY OF BRIGHT CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Revised 1-2015)

On July 24, 1836 the scattered members of the Christian Church in the vicinity of Bright and Logan, Indiana under the leadership of Daniel Baldrige decided to form a religious organization.

The first meetings were held in a barn, owned by John Morgan, about three miles west of Harrison, Ohio.

After ground was donated for a church and graveyard at the corner of Carr Road by Robert Cassaday, a log building was known as Old Union. After the building was gone, the Masonic Hall was erected in its place.

The organization now consisted of 52 members. Some of these members passed on, others later moved away. A number of years later, this organization was disbanded and the building was used for a schoolhouse and church services for different denominations.

In January of 1866, a second organization was effected under the leadership of J. Thornberry. Twenty-three members of the first organization had placed their membership with the Christian Church of Harrison, Ohio.

This second organization consisted of these twenty-three members and a number of others who had not transferred their membership.

During the years intervening between the first and second organization, the services were conducted by ministers of Harrison Church and other churches. The principle ones were B. U. Watkins, J. Henry Knoles Shaw, and George Catt. Also E. Vandiaer and Robert Howe, who were students under B. U. Watkins.

For the second organization, Boswell Judd and Armitage Morgan were chosen as elders. Thomas Medd and Daniel Cloud were chosen as deacons. Mr. Thomas Medd being Blanche Ashley's grandfather. A number of basket dinner meetings were held in Francis Swales' woods near Old Union.

The regular ministers were Thornberry, Jennings, Stanford and Peak.

This organization lasted until 1870. Thereafter, services were held at intervals by ministers from Harrison, Ohio. J. M. Land and L. E. Brown were the outstanding ministers.

Services were held in the Methodist Church, schoolhouse out of Bright, and the Masonic Hall, until the erection of the present building in 1886.

L. E. Brown held services every two weeks in the Masonic Hall, while the church was being constructed.

The building fund was started at \$50, the proceeds from a lawn fete on July 4, 1885.

A subscription list was circulated through the community and was generously subscribed to by people of different denominations. Also by those not holding membership in the church. Some of the contributions were 10 cents and 16 cents. No matter how small, the contribution was greatly appreciated.

The present building, Bright Idea, was dedicated on December 19, 1886. L. E. Brown gave the dedication address. At this service the debt was paid or pledged except \$300. This amount was vouched for by the trustees and paid off by the congregation soon after.

On September 25, 1894, the church was again reorganized by C. A. Freer, minister of Harrison Christian Church. The membership consisted of 82 charter members. At this time, Armitage Morgan was the last surviving member of the first organization.

Of the second organization, only six were living, namely Mrs. Morgan, Mrs. Martin Bader, Mrs. Julius Bader, Mrs. Caroline Hackler, Mr. T. B. Cottingham, and Mrs. Jane Cottingham.

Later charter members were Howard Cottingham, John Caler, Daisy Bruce, Eugene Haddock and Emma Siefferman.

CHARTER MEMBERS OF SEPTEMBER 25, 1894

T. B. Cottingham	Richard Bowton	Louise Cottingham
Geo. W. Morgan	Thomas Medd	Anna Frazier
Armitage Morgan	George W. Frazier	Nancy A. Hathaway
Sybil Tarr	Matilda Frazier	Lou Morgan
Albert Medd	Jane Cottingham	William Van Treese

Harry Bruce
James W. Grubbs
R. C. Frazier
William Grames
Mattie Van Treese
Walter Hurley
Eugene Haddock
Ernest Hathaway
Chas N. Bruce
O. P. Winters
Sarah A. Haddock
Jesse M. Hauk
Margaret Bowton
Nora Hurley
Glennie Frazier
Laura Medd
Emma Frazier
Allie Winters
Clara Kelley
Roy Winters
John L. Sykes
Clair Haddock
Maud Davis
John Roller

Hannah Bowton
M. E. Tutin
Daisy Patterson
Lizzie Hauk
Howard Cottingham
Ella Medd
Nancy J. Hurley
Henrietta Graham
Winona Frazier
Hannah Morgan
Anna Leming
Frank Jacques
Chas Leming
Grace Leming
John Marshall
Effie Jackson
Amy Cook
Rachael Harper
George Sykes
Anna Burns
Carrie Fondong
Mrs. O. Frazier
Frank Winters
Belle Sykes

Charley Cottingham
Albert Cottingham
Thomas Cottingham
Rosa Tarr
Emma Stone
Adda Bunnell
Daniel Bunnell
Anna Bunnell
Maggie Bruce
Mrs. Chas Bruce
Benjamin Bunnell
Laura Cassidy
Mrs. Wilson Grubbs
Anna Medd
Ellan Haddock
Mrs. Thomas Davis
Flora Davis
Mallie Bunnell
Isora

Howard Cottingham (one of the charter members) served many years in the capacity of church work. He was elected clerk of the church board in 1922, which office he held until 1953 then elected trustee in 1926. He held this office 28 years, taught a Sunday School Class seven years and was also organist.

The baptistry was installed in 1946. The baptistry painting was donated by the Hurleys in memory of their mother, Mrs. Nancy Hurley, who was a faithful member for many years,

In 1954 a new bulletin board was erected outside.

On June 13, 1954 there was a congregational meeting of the church, to consider hiring a full time minister. The vote was favorable to hire a full time minister.

Joe Caraway was hired as a full time minister the first of July.

This was the first full time minister for the church.

In 1955 a lot was purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Young. This lot was used to provide more adequate parking facilities.

Four additional lights were installed in the church auditorium, and a mimeograph machine was purchased.

In 1956 the first church newsletter was edited. This was printed each Monday evening by Betty and Patsy Grubbs and Paul and Ethel Cormican with the use of a typewriter and a mimeograph. It was hand folded and hand addressed. This paper was named the "Bright Light." Ralph Caurter took it to the post office Tuesday morning on his way to work.

On March 6, 1956, a meeting of the congregation was called to present the plans of the proposed addition to the church building.

The plans were presented by Guy Hurley, Chairman of the Board. After discussing the plans, and asking questions by the members present, the plans were overwhelmingly approved by members present.

In July 1956 a new addition to the church building was begun: eight rooms, including the minister's study and a basement were added. This new addition was dedicated March 17, 1957.

During the months of July and August 1959, the interior of the building was redecorated. Wallpaper was removed from ceiling and replaced by tile, walls and woodwork were painted, and the outside of the building was painted in September.

On Sunday, August 30, 1959, the ceremony of burning mortgage of the new building addition was observed.

A plaque bearing the inscription of "Presented to Mrs. J.A. Jackson" (Bernice) "by Bright Christian Church in Recognition of Fifty Years Service" as an organist was given.

At a meeting of the congregation on September 14, 1958 a congregational constitution was accepted.

On September 22, 1959 the congregation approved a recommendation of the board that the church purchase a new organ for \$1290.00.

The old pipe organ originally purchased from Harrison Christian Church was replaced with an electric organ.

This organ was moved to the new church building in September 1976.

A piano was purchased a few years after the organ.

A new rug was put on the floor of the auditorium in October 1960.

During the month of November 1961, the ladies classroom was painted and tile was put on the floor.

At a meeting of the congregation on August 29, 1962 a recommendation was approved to purchase a parsonage. A house and lot was purchased from Gerald Reed, on State Line Road about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of Bright.

During the month of August 1965, the outside of the church building was painted.

Restrooms were put in the church building in May 1965.

On September 11, 1966, the church agreed to serve as endorsing church for Lynn and Julie Cleveland as they prepared to go to Brazil, S.A. as missionaries.

At a congregational meeting on September 25, 1968, a proposal was made to start looking for land to purchase for a new building.

The following proposals were made at that meeting: 1 – Purchase at least 5 acres of land; 2 – Finalize building plans and secure a builder in 1973; get estimates on cost of land and cost of building size.

The need for more room was seen, and 5.7 acres of land was bought on State Line Road, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of Bright. The plans were to use this land to build a new church building.

August 1974 the church voted and approved the plans for the new building and to finance construction by selling \$200,000 in bonds.

The fall of 1975 construction of the new building was started, although the work was stopped twice. Final construction was started July, 1976 when the last bond was sold. The building was completed in early September.

The church moved into the building on September 26, 1976. The church met Sunday, September 26, 1976 at the old building for a final service at 9:30 a.m. The service was continued at the new church.

Blanche Ashley, the oldest member of the church led the congregation out of the old building and to the new building. Nancy Galey, newest member was last out and closed the door.

It was planned for the members to walk to the new building, but it was raining, so Ed Seamon and Stanley Harmeyer furnished school buses to haul the people to the new church.

The worship services were held at the new building. Lynn Cleveland, former minister brought the message in the worship service. The church did not have a minister at that time.

Hondel Adams was the first minister to serve in the new building, November, 1976 through January, 1978. The first revival held in the new building was October 10 through 17, 1976, with Ellis Wesner as evangelist.

The first wedding held in the new building was Steve Seamon and Candy Sturgill on Saturday before moving into the church building, September 25, 1976.

The first funeral was Paul Cormican on September 1, 1977.

A storage building was built in 1979.

At the time of moving into the new building, the community was growing rapidly because of several sub-divisions being built in the Bright area.

With the building of new interstate highways and better transportation, people living in Cincinnati found they could live in the country and commute to work in Cincinnati. When these people made Bright their home, they wanted a church home, so Bright church grew along with the community.

Soon it was necessary to make expansions that had been planned with the original building, which meant sacrificing classroom space for more seating in the auditorium.

In 1982, because of the flat roof on the building and trouble with roof leaks, it was decided to redesign the roof and put on a gable roof. The new roof was built over the original roof.

In 1983, because of loss of classroom space and the fellowship hall being in the basement, making it difficult for older people go up and down stairs, it was decided to build classrooms in the basement and build a new fellowship hall and classrooms.

The remaining classrooms off of the auditorium were used to expand the auditorium and move these classes to the new classrooms.

Plans were started late in 1983 to make arrangements for financing, hiring and architect, having plans drawn.

Contracts for building were made and building started late in 1984. Although the building was not completed, the first use of the building was Vacation Bible School in June 1985. Most of the building was finished by August 1985, with minor adjustments to be made later.

Gas fired boilers were used to furnish hot water for heating the new addition. At the same time, heat for the auditorium was converted from electric heat to hot water furnished by the boilers in the new building.

The new fellowship hall was made large enough for inside sports such as volleyball and basketball.

The church membership in 1985 was approximately 400. Average attendance for Bible School was – 154, morning worship – 281, Evening Worship and Youth Groups – 131.

Dale wise was the evangelist and Mark Fugate was associate evangelist in 1985. Mark also served as music director.

The church had six elders and nine deacons for 1986. Three trustees were responsible for care and maintenance of the grounds and buildings.

On March 8, 1987 an early worship service was started. This service started at 8:10 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. During the year of 1987 the ministry plan was adopted. This consisted of individuals selecting a ministry of the church and then being responsible for this ministry.

On March 22, 1992 the time of the services were changed, Early Worship Service now met at 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. Bible School at 10:00 to 10:45, Second Worship Services 11:00 to 12:00 noon.

History of the Church Staff of Bright Christian Church:

SENIOR MINISTER

C. A. Freer, September 25, 1894 – August 16, 1896
R. G. White, October 11, 1896 – November 7, 1897
R. N. Early, November 14, 1897 – December 4, 1898
W. G. Loucks, April 9, 1899 – April 21, 1901
M. L. Buckley, May 19, 1901 – October 8, 1905
J. D. Garrison, October 8, 1905- December 24, 1905
H. M. Milner, January 7, 1906 – October 14, 1906
M. G. Long, February 3, 1907 – June 1910
W. C. Gibbs, 1910 – September, 1911
F. M. Mynick, November, 1911 – August, 1912
Orville Gast, 1913 – 1913
T. H. Beckhott, November 30, 1913 – 1915
J. D. Garrison, 1915 – 1917
S. H. Givler, 1917 – 1917
Maxwell McMullen, August 18, 1918 – 1918
N. E. Florence, 1918 – 1919
Henry W. Cohagen, 1919 – 1927
Earl Biddle, 1927 – 1930
W. E. Guy, 1930 – 1933
Mr. Titus 1933 – 1935
Howard Yonaka, 1936 – 1937
Raymond Simpson, 1937 – 1942
Stuart Mills, 1942 – 1947
Gene Stalker, 1947 – 1950
Harold Beabout, 1950 – 1953
Joe Caraway, 1953 – 1955
Leo A. VanHoose, 1955 – 1957

Charles Carter, 1957 – 1960
Charles Ross, 1961 – 1964
Lynn Cleveland, 1964 – 1967
George Truebold, 1968 – 1969
Larry Pierson, 1969 – 1974
Randy Moore, 1974 – 1976
Hondel Adams, November 1976 – January 1978
Dale Wise, August 1978 – August 1996
Mark Fugate, August 1996 – December 2007
Jeff Stone, August 2009 – present

MUSIC DIRECTOR/MINISTER

Pat Stout, ? – October 1973
Terry Mauer, November 1973 – August 1974
Tom Rutledge, September 1977 – May 1980
Tom Shelton, June 1980 – May 1983
Scott Van Dyke, September 1983 – October 1984
Jeff Lieb, June 2003 – February 2007
Kent Drake, February 2007 - present

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Jeff Helton, November 1983 – October 1984

ASSOCIATE MINISTER

Mark Fugate, October 1984 – July 1996
Jim Gibson, March 1997 – April 1999
Tom Benter, February 2000 – April 2009

YOUTH MINISTER

Phil Hester, June 1987 – May 1991
Rob Sweeney, September 1991 – March 1999
Kevin Smith, September 2000 – present

OFFICE MANAGER

Linda Andry, June 1990 – present

OFFICE STAFF

Debbie Jones, ? – May 1990
Emily Seamon, ?
Dora Roberts, ?

Tracy Knowles, ?
Linda Bauer, ?
Jennifer Clark, August 1999 – June 2008
Sue Miller, January 2004 – January 2004
Karen Hallman, January 2004 – September 2005
Penny Hoeffler, October 2005 – October 2010
Kaylene Rush, February 2001 – present
Renee Caldwell, May 2011 – August 2014

CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Lisa Cox, November 1994 – December 1998
Linda Hutchinson, January 1999 – May 2010
Renee Caldwell, June 2010 – March 2011 (Interim)
Larry Cramer, February 2001 – present

EARLY CHILDHOOD MINISTER

Heather Gard, September 2002 – Spring 2010

FACILITIES MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR

Mike Donohue, May 2003 – April 2013
Dave Moorehead, April 2013 – June 2013
Dusty Burress, July 2013 – present

ASSOCIATE CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Jodi Wise, August 2003 - ?
Tish Piche', June 2005 – June 2006
Jess Holiday, April 2007 – October 2008

TEACHING MINISTER

Harvey Bream, September 2003 – present
Jack Cottrell, January 2007 – August 2011

EXECUTIVE MINISTER

Rob Sweeney, November 2003 – present

FAMILY LIFE DIRECTOR

Linda Hutchinson, June 2010 – present

TREASURER

Rhonda Posey, August 2012 - present