

A HISTORY OF THE LINCOLN PARK CHURCH OF CHRIST

Early business meeting records tell us that the first meeting of the Lord's church in Lincoln Park began at 10:30 a.m. on November 28, 1926. Other sources say that the first meeting occurred on December 1, 1925. All agree that the first meeting was in the home of the S. J. Mankin family at 1021 Mayflower Street, near Ferris, which is two blocks south and two blocks east of the present church building. Lincoln Park had just recently graduated from village to city status. The area was still very rural in many ways. Brothers Mankin and Russell Harendean, members at Vinewood, are credited with the idea of beginning a congregation in Lincoln Park much nearer their homes. They and their families had been taking the bus to the Vinewood church of Christ in southwest Detroit. The Lincoln Park Church of Christ was thus one of the pioneer churches of the new city. The churches of Christ celebrated their first 100 years in Detroit in 1941.

Hugh Hemingway, preacher of the Vinewood Church of Christ, preached the first gospel sermon to a group of twenty--sixteen adults and four children. The first contribution was \$14.10. The congregation started as a self-supporting congregation. Very early, the Harendean family mortgaged their debt-free home for \$2,200 to start a treasury for the new church. The congregation soon moved to Raupp Elementary School. A year after the initial service, the congregation began holding services in the new church building and minister's home combination they built at 2928 Chandler for \$10,000. That house is just one block east of the present building.

The first gospel meeting was held in a borrowed tent at Fort and State (now Southfield) streets. Harvey Riggs of Mayfield, KY preached and E. Wilson lead the singing. There was one restoration and three were baptized: A. I. Smith, Orville Garrison, and Mildred Lobb. Four placed membership. Wednesday evening Bible study and Sunday evening worship were soon added. The first bulletin was published August 3, 1936 and was published every two weeks for a time. One source says the first Vacation Bible School was

(page 3)

conducted in 1937 while another says it was 1944.

The congregation enjoyed steady growth even during the depression years of the 1930s. By 1940, plans were made for a larger meeting place. Three lots were purchased at Fort and Progress streets. Ground was broken July 8, 1947 for a new basement building on the present site. The congregation met for a short time in Goodell School (present site of the Farmer Jack store) at Fort and Champaign streets about this time. The basement was completed at a cost of \$25,000. The first service was held in the basement on February 15, 1948. The auditorium was added in 1952. In 1961, the front entrance and restrooms were changed; the balcony, upstairs classrooms, nursery, training room, and the preacher's office were added. The preacher's office was expanded, the foyer and entry level restrooms were added, and the kitchen and multi-purpose room remodeled in 1983. The lot in the block north of the building was purchased for additional parking at that time.

Houses built or purchased for preachers' families to reside in have been located at 2928 Chandler, 2004 Liberty, and 2985 Alper in Lincoln Park.

The Lincoln Park church established the Wyandotte (now Gateway in Southgate) congregation. Some members also left this congregation to help establish the Strathmoor and South Dearborn congregations when they began. Other churches near and far have been assisted by this congregation as it has always had a heart for missions--even in difficult times.

The first elders were appointed about 1943. They were Fred Conger and Paul Gunter. There were times since when the church did not have elders. Finding men qualified and willing to serve and that the church would follow was an insurmountable barrier at times. Other elders have included Cecil Blackwell, Bud Gunter, Chuck Pulley, Jack Stowe, and Terry Theisen.

Our present elders are Robert Benham, Kenneth Middleton, Louis Montgomery, Ronald White, and Warren Whitelaw. Deacons now serving us are Randy Alt, William Brooks, Steve Lance, Gilbert Maldonado, Chuck Middleton, and Greg Pugh. Other good men have served us as deacons through the years.

The list of men serving the congregation as full-time preachers (with the years of their service as best we can reconstruct them) includes A. B. Gunter (1926), W. Claytus Anderson (1936-38), Roy K. Akers (two times), Elza Huffard (1942-44), Doyle Earwood (1944-47), Vestal Chaffin, William O. Mitchell, K. Dale Pittman, Benjamin C. Morton (1957-63), F. Everette Alexander (1963-73), Larry Grizzell (1974-76), and Ronald K. White (1977-present). The list of interim preachers includes the following men: E. Claude Gardner, Dale Larson, Vernon Magee, Walt Sargent, J. W. Shepherd, and Floyd Wiley. Leaving this congregation to preach elsewhere have been such men as W. H. Gillenwater, Leslie Spear, James Usrey, Rex Smith, C. B. Gunter, L. Lawson, Bob Buchannan, and Jerry Buchannan. We are certain that all of these historical lists are incomplete.

The Lincoln Park church helped to support William Miller for 27 years as he preached for the Highbury Park church in Nassau and helped establish numerous congregations in the Bahamas and beyond in the Caribbean. He continues in that work, and the Highbury Park church has fully supported him since at least 1983. The congregation assisted J. W. Shepherd as he wrote one of his books while living and preaching here. He authored *The Church the Falling Away and the Restoration* and authored or co-authored at least five volumes of the Gospel Advocate series of commentaries on the New Testament. Assistance was given for several years to Gordon French as he preached for the church in Grayling and other northern Michigan congregations. Assistance is presently given to Bill Burgess as he preaches for the Oscoda, MI church. We were the sponsoring congregation for Robin

Stephens while she spent two years as a vocational missionary in Seoul, Korea a few years ago. The congregation has been the sponsoring congregation and primary support of Carol Speirs in northern Haiti since September, 1992. Many other preachers and mission congregations have been assisted throughout the 70 years of our history. The church has also supported the Bible program at Michigan Christian College, Luckett Christian Academy, The Church of Christ Care Center, and Shults-Lewis Children's Home regularly for many years. Many other educational, benevolent, and missionary programs have been helped on an irregular basis.

We wish to gratefully mention the many gospel meetings preached for the Lincoln Park church by Guy N. Woods over a period of almost 50 years. Many other fine men of God have held meetings for the congregation which blessed the Lord's work and his people here. The list is far too long for including here; but we mention Paul Pape, Garth Pleasant, and Marcelle van der Spuy as being among the more recent men to bring God's message to us in the context of gospel meetings.

We appreciate the extensive research of the business meeting minutes of the past 70 years done by Donna White, the oral history of the congregation given by David Lobb at the 50th Anniversary celebration in 1976 (as provided on tape by Marie Miller), and the help of Harry Galbreath and many others who provided materials and memories so generously.

Submitted by the Historical Committee: Ken Middleton, Chairman; Elsie Darling, Pat Gunter, Peggy Morton, Donna White, and Mary Etta Whitelaw. Be sure to see our pictorial review of our history throughout the building--especially downstairs!

Final draft by Ron White, July, 1996.