

WE CALL OURSELVES DISCIPLES

**175th Anniversary Celebration
1828-2003**

October 12 and 26, 2003

(Updated for the 190th Homecoming Celebration – August 5, 2018)



**A Brief History
of**

**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Disciples of Christ)
Wilmington, Ohio**

Celebrating 175 Years Of



**First Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
Wilmington, Ohio**

Ministry 1828 - 2003

***Photo on front cover: Photographer Clarke Nagley took this photo of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) corner of Walnut and Columbus streets, around 1929, when the church building was 21 years old.**

Lori Ann Scott - Editor

175th Anniversary Committee

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Jim Foland – Co-chair

Bruce Henry

Mary Wall

Don Wall

Ruth Ann Faris

Jim Faris

Donald K. Mertz

First Christian is ----

- celebrating 175 years
of existence in Wilmington
with faith, hope and fears.**
- thriving, as fears were cut down;
there were believers and doubters
right here in this town.**
- built on faithfulness and love
as down through the years
prayers were answered from above.**
- grateful for those gone before,
who laid the foundation
and with wings they did soar.**
- prayerful as the Lord we do seek
to show mercy and guidance
whether powerful or meek.**
- a blessing to all who believe;
the word of God guides us
as communion we receive.**
- hopeful as we continue to be blessed
by the workers and givers
who share themselves with zest.**
- welcoming both stranger and friend,
and our love is showing
as we extend a helping hand.**
- following the teachings of Christ;
we call ourselves Disciples
following the One who paid the price.**
- joyful as we celebrate this day
for all of our accomplishments;
Hey, First Christian, “Happy Birthday”!**

-Mary Wall

PREFACE TO CHURCH HISTORY

A church's history is recorded day in and day out in the hearts and minds of Christians serving together in discipleship and ministry. Highlights of events of faith become a shared memory relived in those informal conversations of "Do you remember? Some of these events are recorded as minutes in the monthly reports of the General Board of the church. Other historically recorded events in the life and ministry of a congregation are contained in weekly worship bulletins and monthly "The Wilmington Disciple" newsletters. In a brief form are the written brief historical recollections prepared for historic celebrations. Contained in this publication is a reprint of this church's history written for the 125th Anniversary. The best historical guess is that it was compiled by Mary Louise Foland and Rev. Herman Patton. From the 150th Anniversary Celebration the "Church History in Outline" is also reprinted. The best historical guess is that this was compiled by Mackie and Marjorie Murphy and Kenneth Hill with the help of Dr. David N. Felty, pastor. The 175th Anniversary Celebration history is written by current pastor, Donald K. Mertz. The final segment is a historical listing of the pastors who have served this congregation, Elders and CWF Presidents.

DISCIPLES HISTORY

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a Protestant denomination of approximately 800,000 members in the United States and Canada. It's one of the largest faith groups founded on American soil.

Some key persons and dates in the church's development:



Presbyterian minister Barton W. Stone was born in Port Tobacco, Maryland, December 24, 1772. He died in Hannibal, Missouri, November 9, 1844. Stone was educated as a school teacher and entered the ministry through the Presbyterian Church. He served a church in Cane Ridge, Kentucky, and after hosting the historic Cane Ridge Revival of 1801, he and several others formed the *Springfield Presbytery* denouncing all human creeds and appealing to the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice.

They soon dissolved the *Springfield Presbytery*, and published the *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, one of the documents the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) considers key in its development. They dissolved their denominational ties to enter into unity with “the body of Christ at large.” They called themselves, simply, “Christians.”



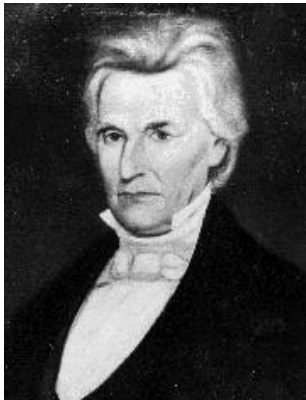
Thomas Campbell was born in County Down, Ireland, February 1, 1763. He died in Bethany, Virginia (now West Virginia), January 4, 1854. He came to America from Scotland in 1807. He was chastised by Pennsylvania church authorities for refusing to use Presbyterian creeds as terms of communion. In 1808 he and others founded the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania. That group adopted the motto, well-known by Disciples, “Where the scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.”

Campbell and others were called “Reformers,” for their desire to restore the Church's first century roots. This way of life came to be known as the “Restoration Movement.”

Near Washington, Pennsylvania, Campbell and his son, Alexander, and the Christian Association established the Brush Run Church, which, in 1815, became part of a nearby Baptist Association.

Reformers and the Baptists differed on key issues. By 1830, the Reformers cut their last ties with the Baptist Association and became known as “Disciples.”

Thomas Campbell’s passion for Christian unity is summed up in his proclamation that: “*The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one.*” This statement is the first and key proposition of Thomas Campbell’s *Declaration and Address*, a work called by some the “Magna Charta” of the movement that preceded the denomination known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).



Alexander Campbell was born September 12, 1788, in the County of Antrim, Ireland. He was raised as a Presbyterian. He attended the University of Glasgow, Scotland.

In 1809, Alexander arrived in America from Scotland, and joined his father, Thomas, in western Pennsylvania. He carefully read and fully endorsed the principles of Thomas’ *Declaration and Address*. Biographer Nathaniel Haynes says that Thomas and Alexander Campbell were “one in their aims, spirit and work.”

The younger Campbell was a prolific writer. In 1823, he founded the periodical *The Christian Baptist*. After the Reformers dissolved ties with the Baptists, Campbell founded a new publication called *The Millennial Harbinger*. He was a talented debater, and in 1829 drew attention to the Restoration Movement in a widely known debate with social reformer Robert Owen. In 1837, he engaged the Roman Catholic John B. Purcell, archbishop of Cincinnati, in a widely publicized eight day debate on the traditions and beliefs of the Catholic Church.

His public speaking skills, writing, and articulation of the place of reason (but not *pure rationalism*) in Christian faith propelled him into the leadership of the “Disciples of Christ.”

A dedicated scholar and educator, Alexander Campbell founded Bethany College, Bethany, Virginia (now West Virginia) in 1840 and served as the school’s first president.

1832

The “Christians” and the “Disciples of Christ” agreed on basic beliefs and aims and united with a formal handshake in Lexington, Kentucky, and created a *new* Christian movement on the American frontier.

1832-1968

The “Christians” and the “Disciples of Christ” functioned and grew as a “movement,” often referred to as the “Stone-Campbell movement.” During this period, Disciples often described the relationship of the Christians and the Disciples of Christ as a “brotherhood.” In 1960, the Commission on Brotherhood Restructure started the task of designing a new form of organization. Throughout the 20th century, American, Asian, Hispanic and African American Disciples congregations multiplied.

1968

A representative assembly meeting in Kansas City overwhelmingly approved the *Provisional Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. Church historian D. Duane Cummins writes: “Approval of the *Provisional Design* marked the passage of the Disciples into denominational maturity. Officially named the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), they became a church.”

**THE STORY OF THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST
In
Wilmington, Ohio**

Written for 125th Anniversary

Introduction

The purpose of this narrative is two-fold: (1) to gather and organize for the first time the available data on the history of the Church of Christ and its antecedents, and (2) to provide an account that may be developed later into an authoritative history. It is the hope that this document may through accepted facts or unwitting inaccuracies evoke information and records not now known to the writer and inspire a thorough treatment of the subject.

The source-materials for a chronicle worthy of the title “history” are sparse. Records for the first twenty-three years were either not made or have been lost by neglect. The first volume of minutes on proceedings of the congregation was started to record the inception of the pastorate of T. J. Melish in the year 1851. Succeeding volumes tell more or less fully of business transacted down to the present. It is not strange that the early years went by unrecorded. The churches of the Restoration Movement were not well organized, found little need of records, and had the usual lack of appreciation for the historic significance of current events.

The true history of a church is that which is told in the spiritual experience of the people. That does not yield to narration and must be surmised and felt. It is important, however, for a congregation to have knowledge of the origins and corporate development of the institution. A church family profits by an understanding of its lineage. It is with this in mind that the officers and members of the Church of Christ provide this story on the occasion of the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the founding of a church of the Disciples of Christ in Wilmington, Ohio.

I The Beginning

The church came into being in October 1828, according to the best sources available. It was a coincidence that Wilmington was named by act of legislature on January 15th of the same year. The early part of the nineteenth century in America was a time of unrest in religious bodies. The ferment was not limited to religion but marked the cultural development of the new nation. New wine had been placed in old wineskins and they were breaking. New ideas were at work and old institutions were cracking. Trends in the Presbyterian and Baptist groups on the frontier had much to do with the beginning of the Disciples of Christ in Ohio. A reform movement among the Baptist developed simultaneously in many congregations and associations. Steps were taken by reformers in some instances to sever relationships with the main body and to cease using the name Baptist. Finding much in common with the followers of Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott, separatists from the Baptists in many localities identified themselves with the Restoration Movement.

Since the transition took place gradually in most situations, it is difficult to establish a date for the founding of the Disciples churches that emerged. There was often no sudden schism or formal act of establishment. There is every indication that the Disciples church in Wilmington came into being in this manner, the consummation taking place in 1828. The Baptist Church that had built the first church in the community in the year 1817 dissolved its organization when all but a few of the members went with the reformers and identified themselves with the followers of Campbell. One source lists the following names among those of the first members, some or all of whom, may have been previously part of the Baptist Church: Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Hughes, George McManis, Mr. and Mrs. William Runnels (Rannells), James Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. William R. Cole, Morris R. Chew, Samuel Adsit, Jacob and Annie Strickle, Mr. and Mrs. James Strickle, Mr. and Mrs. William Hibben, and Mr. and Mrs. Uriah Farquhar. The Baptist Church reorganized on August 6, 1853.

The Memories of Alexander Campbell by Richardson tells of a visit to Wilmington by Alexander Campbell in the spring of 1830. Mr. Campbell preached on Acts 3:12-26, and during the visit expressed his pleasure at the progress of the movement in the area.

The following quotation is found in the Millennial Harbinger of 1831: “Besides, the whole Regular Baptist Church in Wilmington, one female excepted, has embraced the ancient gospel; and now, with many new converts, are endeavoring to walk in the apostolic institutions. The inquiry among these disciples now is, ‘What has the Lord commanded?’ Not, ‘What do the regular Baptists say?’ or, ‘What does the Philadelphia Confession of Faith dictate?’ but, ‘What say the scriptures?’”

II Locations and Buildings

After separation from the Baptists, the congregation continued to use the small brick building that had been constructed on a lot given by Isaiah Morris, situated on the south side of Columbus near the point where Columbus and High Streets now intersect. It was discovered that the lot had been given with the stipulation that it be used for a Baptist Church or revert to the donor. The condition made it necessary for the Christian Church to find another location. Mr. Morris allowed the congregation to raze the building, remove the material and use it in the erection of another house of worship. The site chosen was on the west side of Walnut Street between Columbus and Locust where Pendry’s Plumbing Shop now stands. The new structure was erected in 1833 or 1834. It is probable that the building was sold after many years to C. A. Taylor who converted it into a carriage shop, although accounts differ on the question. Walls of the original building are apparently part of the building in which Pendry’s Plumbing Shop is located.

The congregation remained at the Walnut Street location until a short time before building and occupying a one-story gothic structure on the south corner of Columbus and North South. There was an interlude during which worship was conducted in the Town Hall. The new house of worship was constructed in two stages. In 1874 the congregation placed a roof on the completed basement and used it for services until the superstructure was finished. The dedication of the completed building was held on April 16, 1882, with Isaac Errett preaching the sermon of dedication. The total cost was \$10,000. The building was used continuously until it was destroyed by fire on Sunday morning, November 20, 1921.

A group from the Christian Church organized a new congregation March, 1908, and became known as the Walnut Street

Church of Christ, while the name Central Christian was used for the original congregation. The building now used by the Church of Christ was erected by the new congregation and was dedicated on October 3, 1909. Walter Scott Priest of Columbus, Ohio, gave the dedicatory message. After thirteen years the two congregations were reunited. A great combined service held in the Murphy Theatre commemorated the joyous occasion on May 29, 1921. Beginning with the service of worship on Sunday, June 5, 1921, the Walnut Street building was used for services. The name now used to designate the church was chosen at the time of the merger. The original building was used for Sunday School until it was destroyed by fire.

Mr. N. Huston Moore constructed the Nellie Moore Memorial Building on the site of the old Central Christian Church in memory of his daughter who was very active in the work of the church and presented it to the congregation. The service of dedication took place on November 30, 1924. The building was used from the beginning for social and educational activities. The second floor was remodeled in 1951 to make possible increased use of the space. The auditorium was converted into a social hall and a kitchen was established in two adjoining rooms. Fellowship Hall is much in demand for both church and civic meetings.

III Early Leaders

Few congregations during the early years of the Brotherhood in Ohio were served by fulltime pastors. Churches depended for preaching and leadership upon resident laymen or itinerant preachers and evangelists. The first record of calling a minister for the church in Wilmington gives the name of T. J. Melish who became pastor on 1851. The names of a number of men are mentioned in connection with the earliest period, 1828-1851. Some of them became prominent in the history of Disciples in Ohio. They were: George McManis, whose contribution to both church and community is cited in histories in Clinton County, David Staats Burnet, James Challen, Aylette Raines, William Pinkerton and E. H. Hawley. The Millennial Harbinger of 1837 states that John Rogers was preaching in Wilmington. Walter Scott had some part in the leadership of the church and must have visited Wilmington on occasions during the time his residence was in Cincinnati. There seems no way of determining how long or in what

way the men named served the church in Wilmington. The stature most of them achieved as leaders in the unfolding of Buckeye Disciples history leaves no doubt about the quality of their contribution to Wilmington.

A list of the pastors and the dates of their service is appended to this story. During the first seventy-two years of the life of the church, there were two pastorates of four years, and the others lasted one or two years. Beginning with the turn of the century the length of pastorates increased notably.

IV Numerical Growth

A few statistics are available to indicate the numerical growth of the congregation. The Millennial Harbinger of 1831 states that the congregation in Wilmington numbered 80 members. Halls register of 1848 reported the membership to be 135. The convention proceedings of the Ohio Christian Missionary Society in 1853 shows 120 members reported; in 1854, 147 were reported. The roll in 1904 had 491 names. Thirty years later the total number was 1100. In 1952 the Year Book of the Disciples of Christ reported 979 members.

The Brotherhood made rapid progress during the early years in southwestern Ohio. The shift of the center of gravity in leadership from Bethany, West Virginia, to Cincinnati with the death of Alexander Campbell in 1866, and the waxing influence of Isaac Errett must have had accelerating effect on growth of churches in the area. The presence of Walter Scott in Cincinnati undoubtedly added to the momentum which was given by many factors.

V The Wider Field

The church has been closely related through its leaders and members to progress in the community and the Brotherhood. David Staats Burnet of Cincinnati had much to do with the formative years and became one of the outstanding personalities in Ohio Disciples history. A genius for organization gave him the relation to organized work in the state that Alexander Campbell had to debating and Isaac Errett to journalism. T. J. Melish was one of the group that conceived the idea of a state convention and proposed the historic gathering in Wooster in 1852. He served as one of the officers that convened the

Assembly, and later was one of those given the responsibility of dividing the state into districts for missionary purposes. He later returned to the Baptist fold and served as a member of a delegation representing the Baptists to explore possibilities of reconciliation. F. M. Green had a prominent part in the Sunday School movement and had served as head of the Ohio Christian Sunday School Association before becoming pastor of the church.

T. D. Garvin, who is listed as pastor of the church during the years 1865-1869, assisted by his brothers, Hugh Garvin and James Garvin, started a college in Wilmington in 1865. The school was named Franklin College. Classes were held in Isaac Bing's tobacco store on the southeast corner of Main and South. A campaign was conducted to raise \$20,000, with which to purchase 33 acres to the east of town and erect a building. The fund was raised in cash and pledges, the land acquired, and the cornerstone of the new building was laid on July 4, 1866. The new structure was opened on September 22, 1868. Classes were held in the Christian Church for one year during construction. Part of the funds was in pledges which were not paid, and it was necessary to sell the property on judgment in favor of the workmen. The Society of Friends acquired the building and grounds and reopened the college with dedication on April 11, 1871, changing the name to Wilmington College.

When the effort was being made to raise the fund of \$20,000, a meeting was held on January 6, 1866, in the Courthouse situated where the First National Bank now stands. It was found that all but \$800 was assured. Six women of the Christian Church offered to underwrite \$500 of the amount if they should be granted the exclusive right to operate the refreshment stand at the coming agricultural fair. The goal was reached before the meeting closed. Members of the church contributed generously in the campaign.

Disciples leaders were outstanding in the establishment and operation of educational institutions during the 1870's. Disciples, for some unknown reason, led in starting and managing normal schools in Ohio. Wilmington College is one of several schools that came into being because of the unusual interest of Disciples in higher education following the Civil War.

The Garvins started the Wilmington Journal. All three taught at the college. Hugh Garvin was the first of the Disciples to go to Europe, and to become versed in higher criticism in the interpretation of the scriptures. T. D. Garvin founded many churches over a wide area of country.

Another aspect of the broad interests of the church is seen in the young men and women who went out of the congregation into the missionary or pastoral ministry. W. P. Bently served as a missionary in China for fifteen years. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Benlehr entered missions and labored from 1904 to 1941 in India. The Benlehers are now retired, making their home in Encinitas, California. Kelly O'Neall entered the pastoral ministry and is now pastor of the Central Christian Church, Denver, Colorado. Arthur VanDervort entered the pastoral ministry and is now serving the Northhill Church of Christ, Akron, Ohio. Luther Villars had entered the ministry before moving to Wilmington and becoming a member of the congregation but has been closely associated with the church and was very active in its youth work; he is now pastor of the Church of Christ at Salem, Missouri.

The church has been greatly interested in the cause of Christian missions during the years. In addition to W. P. Bentley and Mr. and Mrs. Benlehr, who entered the field of missions as members of the congregation, a link relationship was maintained with Mrs. M. Jackson Scott and David Rioch, missionaries. Mrs. Esther Bonham, wife of Dr. Kenneth Bonham, is the Link Missionary of the church at the present time. Dr. and Mrs. Bonham are beginning their third term of service in India.

One of the first organizations of the Christian Women's Board of Missions among the Disciples in Ohio was established in the congregation in July 1877.

Three state conventions of the Disciples have been held in Wilmington. The thirty-fourth convention was held here in May 26 – 28, 1885, with Robert Moffett presiding. The forty-eighth convention of the Ohio Society was held May 23-25, 1899, with H. McDermid as president. The seventy-eighth convention met in Wilmington May 20-22, 1929, when J. J. Tisdall presided, and Myers Y. Cooper was the principal speaker.

More than 100 members of the State Board of Ohio Christian of the Ohio Christian Women' Fellowship were entertained for the annual meeting by the church in April, 1953. Many meetings and assemblies of the Christian Church in the state and district have been held in Wilmington through the years because of the historic interest and participation in the work of the Brotherhood.

VI Christian Education

The work of the Sunday School has been a major interest of the church since the turn of the century. The convention proceedings of the Ohio Christian Missionary Society in 1853 makes mention of a Sunday School in Wilmington, which indicates it was a pioneer in the movement among Ohio Disciples. The school shared in the increased activity that marked Protestant church life following World War I. A large men's class was maintained for years, with a peak attendance of 244 on Easter Sunday, 1927. Some of the class today recall the parade led by a brass band in which the class marched through the streets to attend an interdenominational men's meeting at the Friends Church. The Loyal Berean Women's Class attained an attendance of 100 on Easter Sunday, 1927. Christian Endeavor Societies were organized for young people in 1928 and were the forebearers of the Christian Youth Fellowship and Chi Rho (Intermediate) groups for young people now established. The enrollment has not varied greatly in the past twenty-five years. The average attendance has remained between 200 and 300 during the period.

VII The Present

A closely graded Church School provides Christian education for all ages from the toddlers to the aged with Sunday evening youth groups for senior and intermediate youth. A men's league provides fellowship for the men of the church and their friends. The Christian Women's Fellowship through its circles and combined meeting plans and carries out the women's work of the church. The work of planning and administration of the program of the church is done by a Board of Officers consisting of the elders and deacons of the congregation meeting once a month. The functional activities of the church are carried out through committees of the Board on Stewardship, Membership, Development, Evangelism, Christian Education, Missions

and Benevolence, Worship, and Property, which meet simultaneously once each month. A budget of \$18,000 was adopted for the current fiscal year, approximately \$3,000 of which is devoted to missions and benevolences. The roll of the membership is being revised for the first time in many years and will be presented for adoption at the close of the calendar year 1953. There will be found appended to this document a list of the officers of the congregation, a list of the teachers and officers of the Church School, and a list of the officers of fellowship organizations.

VIII The Future

Conscious of a long history of faith and work, aware of the responsibilities of the present in a growing community, hopeful of the “dream that is in our heart”, the congregation faces the future with a sense of divine mission.

**Celebrating 180 Years of Christian Service and
100 years of ministry
at the corner of
Walnut and Columbus Streets**

The following information was written by Shirley Lakatos and was obtained from documents found in the time capsule in the corner stone of the sanctuary that was opened in October 2008. The biography information about the nine persons mentioned in this information was supplied by Shirley as she was an avid genealogist.

**THE PREVIOUS HISTORY
From the minutes of the period**

The Christian Church was established in Wilmington, O., in the year 1828. For more than three quarters of a century it held together in union, enduring the trials and rejoicing in the victories incident to church life.

On May 1, 1907, at a regular meeting of the official board, 17 members being present, 9 of the officers declared their belief that for the good of the church that the services of E. J. Meacham the pastor at that time, should be discontinued, and voted to give him the customary three months' notice to that effect. Neither the minor part of the Board nor the minister received this action gracefully and soon a dark storm cloud gathered. On the following Sunday, May 5, 1907, the tempest broke in fury, and the unity of the church was doomed. The weakened bands could not be strengthened by any efforts made, and on March 1, 1908, they were forever sundered when the 9 brethren were formally excluded from the membership of the church.

A new church was organized on March 15, 1908, to be known as the "Church of Christ". Sixty-five members of the old church left it of their own accord and joined with the nine in forming the new organization. Thus, began what for greater ease of distinction, is publicly known as the Walnut Street Church of Christ. To the faithful record of its membership and special phrases of activity, this book is devoted.

The names of the nine persons excluded from the Central Christian Church, corner of Columbus and South Streets are:

J. F. Bennett

F. D. Blair

Arlando Tompson

J. M Wisecup

C. A. Rannells

W. C. Applegate

J. L. Rannells

J. D. White

John Doyle

**NINE WITHDRAWN
1 MARCH 1908**

William C. Applegate, born 3-15-1858 to Abner and Jane Tillinghast Applegate, married Lillie Bentley 10-10-1893. He died 11-30-1931 and is buried in Sugar Grove Cemetery.

He was baptized February 1883 and withdrew from Central Christian Church March 1, 1908.

Lillie Bentley, born 2-11-1873 to John H. and Etta Jenkins Bentley, died 11-15-1960 and is buried in Sugar Grove Cemetery. She joined Central Christian Church by letter 1893 from Bowersville and transferred to Walnut St. Church Christ 7-20-1908.

William attended local schools and Wilmington College and in early manhood was a teacher. His business life was as a mail clerk, and he retired in 1923 after 31 years of service.

He and Lillie were the parents of one daughter Helen who married Wales B. Otis, and had three children, Jeanne, Wales, and William C.

William had two brothers, Joseph and Francis. After the death of their mother, on 9-5-1878 their father Abner married Nancy Brann, daughter of Tilghman and Rebecca Starbuck Brann, who were the parents of

Harry, Bertha (Mrs. Herbert Porter), Martha (Mrs. Roscoe Pennington), Alma (Mrs. Leo Huffman).

William was described in his obituary as ‘having the friendliest of natures, and he possessed a broad charity for those who differed from him.’ Given to hospitality, his geniality and fine sense of humor made him a most delightful host and companion.

Descendants of this family still members of this church are from his half-sister Martha Applegate Pennington - her grandchildren Steve, Milton and Ellen Murphy, Ronald Pennington and Martha Jane Summers.

***James Farr Bennett*, born 7-22-1854 to Levi and Sarah Wilson Bennett, married Ida Pendry on 6-6-1877. He died 4-30-1923 and is buried in Sugar Grove Cemetery. He was baptized 3-20-1870 and withdrew from Central Christian Church 3-1-1908. He was in the seed business and a County Commissioner.**

Ida Pendry was born 4-30-1857 to John and Miriam Jenkins Pendry and died 9-17-1931, buried in Sugar Grove Cemetery. She was baptized 7-8-1877 and transferred to Walnut Street Christian Church 7-26-1908. This couple were devoted church members and gave freely of time and money to the advancement of the Lord’s work.

They were the parents of five children: Harry R. (Cleona Bowers), Earl (Ruth Rhonemus), Roy (Elma Fife), Effie (Franklin) Thatcher and Jessie (Oliver) Vandervort.

Descendants of this family still members here are Jeff, Rodney (Bonnie), Robert, Roger (Sue Anne), Connie (Skibba), Phil (Bonnie) Bennett, Marjorie Drummond, and Gary (Bobbie) Thatcher.

Frank D. Blair From his obituary: Frank D. Blair, Principal of the Wilmington High School, died at his home on Rombach Avenue, Monday afternoon (10-9-1911) after an illness extending through the summer, from an affliction of the stomach. He was the son of Josephus and Margaret (Marble) Blair, and was born in Grape Grove, Greene County, March 20, 1862. He came with his parents to Clinton County in 1867 and has made this his home ever since. He was a graduate of the class of 1881 of the Wilmington High School, and in September of the same year entered Delaware College, remaining two years. He returned to his home and taught in district school. Pursuing his studies, he served as a Professor in Wilmington College, and in 1902-3 was Principal of the Sabina schools. In 1903 he was employed as First Assistant of the High School and in 1906 was elected Principal, which position he held until his death. He was married October 16, 1891, to Miss Emma Lewis, of New Vienna, and to the union was born a daughter Ruth, who with the mother survives.

Mr. Blair was baptized July 1892 and withdrew 3-1-1908. Emma Lewis, his wife, was born 9-30-1859 to George and Martha Lewis and died 8-3-1927 in Pasadena, CA, where she lived with daughter Ruth. She and Frank are both buried in Sugar Grove Cemetery.

Mr. Blair was described as a man original in thought and expression, practical but not cold or calculating, fair in his dealings with men, impulsive and warm-hearted.

John N. Doyle – Obituary – John Doyle, 72, Wilmington contractor, died at his home, 182 Rombach Ave., Sunday at 10:35 a.m. of cerebral hemorrhage. He had been in failing health for more than two years. Mr. Doyle was the builder of the Christian Church, the Masonic Temple building and the Carnegie Library. He was born in Highland County March 4, 1859 and was the son of Wilson W. and Sarah Fling Doyle. On February 1, 1887, he married Ella Barlow who was born 5-16-1866 to William J. and Christina Gerard Barlow. John and Ella were the parents of Ira B. and daughter Ruth who died in infancy.

John joined Central Church of Christ in 1896 by letter from Bowersville and withdrew 3-1-1908. Ella joined 1896 by letter from the Port William Methodist Church. She transferred 7-20-1908 to Walnut Street Christian Church.

John died 9-13-1931; Ella died 12-20-1947 and both are buried at Maple Grove Cemetery, Port William, OH.

***Charles Allen Rannells* was born on a farm near Wilmington, August 17, 1859 to Thomas G. and Massie Wiley Rannells. He was married September 6, 1882, to Clara Kirk, who was born 3-31-1862 to John M. and Mary Emily Babb Kirk. They were the parents of three children: Edith (Robert L.) Lewis, Sara (Rendel H.) Terrell and Mary E. Rannells.**

Charles joined Central Church of Christ in January 1893 by letter from Irvington, IN. Clara was baptized January 1893. He withdrew 3-1-1908, and she transferred 7-28-1908 to Walnut Street Christian Church.

He died 11-13-1932 and was buried in Sugar Grove Cemetery. Clara died 11-22-1941 at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Terrell, at Whittier, CA, following a heart attack. She was buried in Sugar Grove Cemetery.

***John L. Rannells*, brother of Charles, was born 3-24-1857 to Thomas G. and Massie Wiley Rannells. He lived his entire life on the Rannells' homestead on the Prairie Pike. He was one of seven children.**

He was married 2-24-1887 to Louella Bentley, born 9-21-1860 to Elam and Nancy Custis Bentley. They were the parents of three children: Thomas Errett, William R. and Louise Cummins.

John was baptized in February 1886 and withdrew 3-1-1908; Louella transferred 7-26-1908 to Walnut Street Christian. John was a faithful member of this church for many years. His religion was a very real and

vital force in his life. It was the dependable, everyday workable sort. His loyalty in church attendance, his liberality in the support of the church and its missionary and benevolent work, his warm love for the church and its fellowship were characteristics of his religion.

He died 9-17-1934; Louella died 10-20-1959 and both are buried in Sugar Grove Cemetery. Ralph Rannells of Cape May in Wilmington is a grandson of this couple although Ralph is now a Methodist.

Arlando Thompson was born 2-20-1865 to William and Nancy Jane Clemens Thompson. His wife, whom he married 8-27-1885, was Ella M. Pendry. She was born 8-3-1865, the daughter of John and Miriam Jenkins Pendry and a sister of Ida Pendry (James F.) Bennett.

They were the parents of one son, Rodney Glenn, b. 12-2-1889 and d. 11-23-1892 at the age of 2 years 11 months and 21 days.

Arlando and Ella were baptized January 1893, but he withdrew 3-1-1908; she transferred 7-26-1908 to Walnut Street Christian Church.

He died 2-21-1918; she died 5-26-1954, and both are buried in Sugar Grove.

John D. White, former County Commissioner and well-known farmer, died 8-8-1922 at his home on North South Street. He was born 8-28-1850 to Grafton B. White, prominent attorney, and Sarah Morris. On April 9, 1873, he was married to Laura B. Truitt, born 9-19-1851 to Benjamin and Rebecca Applegate Truitt. They were the parents of one son, Robert.

John was baptized January 1896 and withdrew 3-1-1908 to from Walnut Street Christian. Laura was baptized June 1866 and transferred 7-26-1908 to Walnut Street.

John and Laura who died 4-23-1933 are both are buried in Sugar Grove Cemetery.

A lengthy memoir was written by Rev. J. L. McWilliams. Mr. White was noted for his habits of industry, sobriety and thrift. He was a thorough going business man, and the sound business principles which lay at the base of his material success called him into public service. He was a Trustee of Union Twp., County Commissioner and a director of the First National Bank.

***Jacob M. Wisecup* According to church membership records, he became a member of Central Christian Church 3-2-1902 by letter from New Vienna and withdrew 3-1-1908. His wife Ella transferred 7-26-1908 to Walnut Street Christian.**

His obituary was in the Wilmington News-Journal May 2, 1934. It states "Jacob Wisecup, 81, formerly a resident of Wilmington, died at his home at Marshall, according to word received by his daughter, Mrs. Jennie Campbell of near Belfast, a student at Wilmington College. Mr. Wisecup left Wilmington approximately 15 years ago. He formerly was a carpenter and was active in Church of Christ activities. Besides Mrs. Campbell, he is survived by a daughter, Miss Sara Wisecup, at home." Burial was in New Antioch Cemetery

Research gave us this; Jacob Martin Wisecup, b. 7 May 1852 to Abraham Wisecup and Sarah Matthews of Adams Co., d. 1 May 1934 in Highland Co., OH. He was married in Adams Co. 20 Dec 1877 to Rhoda Ella Florea, b. 15 Nov 1858 to Hamilton Florea and Sarah Peterson. Rhoda d. 8 Apr 1921 and is also buried in New Antioch Cemetery.

FROM THE TIME CAPSULE
A Chapter in Church History
October 15th, 1908

The original Christian Church of Wilmington O. was organized more than fifty-years ago. The membership on August 1st, nineteen hundred (sic) (1900) was about three-hundred and fifty. At that time E. J. Meacham became the pastor. He was ambitious, energetic and suave, and soon became very popular. The church officers, as is too often done, practically gave the church over to the management of the pastor. By the time he had driven for four years, several of the officers began to think the speed was becoming too great; they were sure of it at the end of the fifth year, and began to press upon the brakes. But the momentum had become so great that a slight application made sparks fly. Every time an officer touched the brake the grinding became more disagreeable.

During Mr. Meacham's Sixth year a new church building project was launched. In this the pastor continued to over reach himself in his dealing with the trustees and the official board. The unpleasant relations grew, and on May the 1st, 1907, at a regular meeting of the official board, nine to eight of those present voted to ask Mr. Meacham to close his labors here Aug. 1st, 1907, which was giving him three months' notice according to agreement.

By this time sparks had generated flames. Some sort of meeting was held at the pastor's residence; The church was filled on May 5th; An incendiary sermon was preached; The minister left the house; And one of the elders took the chair for business. The initiative and referendum doctrine was proclaimed, and business began. Almost all the voting was on one side. It was decided: (1) to rescind the action of the official board on May 1st, and to expunge the record from the minutes; (2) to ask the official board to resign; and (third) to reemploy Mr. Meacham. Thus the combustibles that had been accumulating for two or more years had exploded, and division was inevitable.

After six weeks the pastor resumed his labors but not with a united church. During the summer a few weak efforts at reconciliation were made, but without effect. In January 1908, the pastor publicly announced that the nine men who voted against him on May 1st, had

done him no wrong, and that it would have been better for him and for the church if he had gone Aug. 1st 1907. But the end was not yet. On Feb. 23d, 1908, “at high noon”, the nine men above referred to, would be excluded from membership, unless they should make satisfactory acknowledgements. They would not do this, and therefore receive the “ban of excommunication” by a vote in the public congregation.

Thus nine brethren, most of whom had been members of the church from their childhood; and who have brought up their children in the church; who have been liberal and large payers, without whom the church could not have attained its largest membership of 700; without whom the honor and power of the Disciples in Wilmington could not have been as great as it is; men who are accounted honorable and upright in their business in all the outside world; these men were excluded from the church they helped to build, and that too, all because they performed their conscientious duty in voting against the pastor’s longer stay, and because they could not submit to the indignities heaped upon them on account of this action.

This is why the Church of Christ was organized on Mar. 15th, 1908, with a membership of seventy-four. Further accounts of the organization are also deposited in the corner stone.

Written by an observer though not a participant in the incipient affairs leading to the division; but now a full member and an elder in the new church.

Typewritten by W. B. Rannells, S. W. Rannells

REUNITED

At the May 1921 Board Meeting of Central Christian Church, Minister Lloyd H. Miller tendered his resignation ‘owing to an urgent call and larger opportunity at Bloomington, Indiana.’ At a called meeting May 25, 1921, it was recommended the deferring of a call to another minister until the possibility of union of Central and Walnut Street Churches could be determined in the proper way. John Cashman expressed his belief in the possibility of union.

RESOLUTION: Be it resolved by the Official Board of Central Church of Christ that the Official Board of Walnut Street Church of Christ be requested to appoint a committee of their Board to meet in joint session with a like committee from this Board, for the purpose of discussing the possibility of the union of the two churches above named into one church. And, be it further resolved that Brother John Cashman is instructed by this Board to communicate the above request to the Official Board of Walnut Street Church.

The Central Church Committee consisted of John Cashman, P. H. Vandervort, Allan Smith, C. A. Ward, William Smithson, Rufus Johnson.

At the regular meeting June 7, 1921, Mr. Cashman reported a merger was recommended on the basis of entire forgetfulness of past difficulties, and avoidance of all things that have caused dissension in the past. On June 21 the report from the committee was voted on and accepted with the amendment of Article 3 increasing the number of trustees from 6 to 7, three of which to be from Central and 4 from Walnut Street. At the July 5 meeting, a committee was appointed to select Central’s portion of Board and Trustees of the new organization. Plans were made for a joint Congregational meeting the next Sunday (July 9, 1921).

The Union was complete, and the Walnut Street Church building was chosen for worship. The Central Church building was used for Sunday School until it was destroyed by fire later that year.

The new congregation was known as First Church of Christ.

CHURCH HISTORY IN OUTLINE
Compiled for 150th Anniversary

- 1790 -- First settlers in Clinton County, Ohio.**
- 1801 -- Barton W. Stone's Cane Ridge Revival begins "Second Great Awakening" on Western frontier in Kentucky.**
- 1804 -- "Last Will and Testament" of Springfield Presbytery issued as call for Christian unity. Stone leaves Presbyterians and adopts name "Christian".**
- 1808 -- Thomas Campbell excluded from Presbyterians for "open communion" practices.**
- 1809 -- Thomas Campbell's "Declaration and Address" published as call for Christian unity.**
- 1810 -- Beginning of settlement in Wilmington.**
- 1810-17 Baptists in Wilmington begin meeting, first in homes and then in courthouse.**
- 1817 -- Regular Baptist Church erects first church building in Wilmington on Columbus Street near Prairie Road.**
- 1818 -- Samuel Rogers, friend of Barton Stone introduces "Christian" movement at New Antioch.**
- 1825 -- Alexander Campbell preaches in Wilmington.**
- *1828-- Wilmington incorporated. Regular Baptist Church, now located at Columbus and High, votes to join Disciples of Christ.**
- 1830 -- Alexander Campbell returns to preach in Wilmington.**
- 1831 -- Alexander Campbell reports on Wilmington church's progress in "Millennial Harbinger" magazine. Church membership is 80.**
- 1832 -- "Christians" and "Disciples" unite in Lexington, Kentucky.**
- 1833-34 Church building moved to Walnut Street between Columbus and Locust.**
- 1836 -- J. Taffe of Wilmington goes on preaching tour with Alexander Campbell.**
- 1837 -- John Rogers preaching in Wilmington.**
- 1840 -- Evangelist Walter Scott preaches in Wilmington.**
- 1844 -- Disciple Arthur Carihfield of Chillicothe debates Universalist Thomas Gilmer in Wilmington.**
- 1848 -- Church membership is 125.**
- 1851 -- T. J. Melish becomes first "settled" pastor for Wilmington Disciples.**

- 1852 -- T. J. Melish becomes one of officers at first Ohio Disciples State Convention.
- 1853 -- Sunday School known to be in existence.
- 1865 -- T. D. Garvin, pastor. Hugh Garvin, founder of Franklin College. James Garvin, founder of Wilmington Journal.
- 1870 -- Franklin College sold to Society of Friends and re-named Wilmington College.
- 1874 -- Construction of basement for Central Christian Church at Columbus and South. Josephine Fife of Wilmington attends organizational meeting of Christian Women's Board of Missions.
- 1877 -- Wilmington CWBM founded.
- 1882 -- "Old Central" completed. Isaac Errett preaches dedication sermon.
- 1885 -- 34th Ohio Disciples Convention in Wilmington.
- 1899 -- 48th Ohio Disciples Convention in Wilmington.
- 1903 -- 75th Anniversary Celebration. Church membership 491.
- 1904-41 Mr. and Mrs. Charles Behlehr serve as missionaries to India.
- 1908 -- Walnut Street Church of Christ established. 383 N. Walnut Street Parsonage purchased from G.M. Cadwallader for \$4,200. All full time ministers have lived in it ever since.
- 1921 -- Churches re-unite as First Church of Christ.
"Old Central" burns down. J. A. Long, pastor.
- 1924 -- Nellie Moore Memorial Building constructed on "Old Central" site. First mention of proposal for election of officers by congregation. Issue not decided.
- 1925 -- First mention of deaconesses being appointed.
- 1926 -- L. E. Brown becomes pastor and dies after five month pastorate. A. H. Wilson becomes new pastor. 504 new members added during his term of pastoral ministry.
- 1927 -- First discussion of a church newspaper. Considered use of ads and subscriptions to pay for project. Every Member Financial Canvas yields \$80 per week for local expenses and \$20 per week for missions.
- 1928 -- 100th Anniversary Celebration. President Bert Wilson of Eureka College, speaker. Evangelistic effort produces 179 new members. Church membership 1147. Christian Endeavor Societies (pre-CYF) formed.
- 1929 -- 78th Ohio Disciples Convention in Wilmington.

- 1935 -- Ladies Aid Society formed. Joseph Daniel appointed elder.
- 1937 -- O. L. Hull, pastor.
- 1947 -- Otha R. Clary, pastor.
- 1948 -- Ladies Aid and CWBM become Christian Women's Fellowship. Forrest Tucker becomes first State Secretary of Ohio Christian Men's Fellowship and serves on Ohio Disciples Board of Managers.
- 1950 -- Blizzard of 1950. Worship service held with only Rev. Otha Clary and Maynard Borton in attendance.
- 1950's -- Many members contribute skills and labor for construction of Camp Christian.
- 1951 -- First District CMF meeting held in Wilmington.
- 1952 -- Herman M. Patton, pastor.
- 1953 -- 125th Anniversary Celebration. A. Dale Fiers, President of United Christian Missionary Society, speaker. Church membership 992. Ohio CWF Board Meeting in Wilmington.
- 1954 -- George Pidgeon serves on Ohio Disciples Board of Managers.
- 1956 -- Name changed to First Christian Church.
- 1958 -- Helen Louise Curtis becomes church board's first woman Secretary.
- 1961 -- Bruce Patton ordained to Christian ministry at Wilmington.
- 1962 -- District Assembly in Wilmington.
- 1963 -- A. H. Wilson returns as interim pastor. Randall E. Griffith becomes new pastor.
- 1964 -- First Christian Church shares worship services with St. Anthony's Episcopal Church. Nursery completed in back of sanctuary.
- 1965 -- George Pidgeon serves on Board of United Christian Missionary Society.
- 1965-66 Two worship services held during summer months.
- 1966-73 Mary Eleanor Tener Sanders serves in Alaska with United Presbyterian Board of Missions.
- 1968 -- W. C. Foster, interim pastor. Ruth Pidgeon becomes Ohio CWF President.
- 1969 -- Richard D. Weller, pastor. Ruth Pidgeon serves on Disciples' first General Board for U.S. and Canada. Nellie Moore Building becomes area location for Church World Service appeals.

- 1970 -- Ohio CWF Board Meeting in Wilmington.
- 1972 -- Olive Mathews becomes first woman elder. Pendry property purchased at 116 Columbus St. for \$41,500. Paid off in 1984.
- 1973 -- Special All-Church Birthday Party. Office space provided for Clinton County Council on Aging.
- 1974 -- William A. Arthur, interim pastor. Sanctuary remodeled. Special Labor Day Celebration. 33 pews bought for \$11,207.
- 1975 -- David N. Felty, pastor. Suzann Murphy becomes District CWF Consultant. Youth scripture readers added to worship. Jerry Florea, Mike Dunn, and Karen Doyle become first high school deacons and deaconesses.
- 1976 -- Special U.S. Bicentennial Worship Service with music from Revolutionary Era. Opening worship exercises return to youth Sunday School. Dale Inwood becomes District CMF Chairman. Jane Felty becomes member of Board of Directors for Division of Overseas Ministries.
- 1977 -- District CMF Rally in Wilmington. Three children's choirs (toddlers through 8th grade) sing for All-Church Christmas Party. Chancel Choir sings premiere of anthem written by Robert J. Haskins. Jane Felty becomes member of Disciples General Board and Administrative Committee.
- 1977-78-- Blizzards cause cancellation of many church activities. All worship services held, however, with moderate attendance.
- 1978 -- 150th Anniversary Celebration. Kenneth L. Teegarden, General Minister and President, speaker. Visits by former pastors. Church membership 627. Church library expanded. Indonesian Festival of Faith with Posumah family. William A. Arthur, former UCC lay pastor, becomes first "ecumenical" elder. First budget over \$50,000 adopted.

Additional History Highlights

Compiled by Mary Wall, Church Historian

- 1979 -- Board of Trustees approved purchase of John Pendry property – 116 Columbus St.
- 1980 -- Rev. Herman M. Patton dies. David Harper, interim pastor.

- 1981 -- Edgar W. Henning, interim pastor. Donald K. Mertz, Pastor. Storm windows bought for church, \$500.
- 1982 -- CWF Holiday Tea was begun by Frances Mertz. Began Spare-A-Dime offering. Parsonage roof replaced for \$3,080.
- 1983 -- Men of the church installed sidewalk on Walnut St. side.
- 1984 -- Gift of Handbells given to church. Final payment on loan for Pendry property.
- 1985 -- John Dailey installed a light in the belfry.
- 1986 -- Robert J. Haskins, Chancel Choir Director honored with "This Is Your Life".
- 1987 -- Pendry property was torn down.
- 1988 -- "Resolution of Appreciation" given to Maxwell Murphy in honor of his service to First Christian. Study and Plans Committee began planning new education addition.
- 1990 -- Capital Campaign for education addition. Loper Property (140 Columbus St.) bought for parking lot.
- 1991 -- Ground Breaking of education addition. Bruce Henry kept a daily record of progress. Book in trustees' folder.
- 1992 -- April 3, moved into new addition from Nellie Moore Building. Sold the Nellie Moore building at 160 N. South St. for \$87,500. Transfer of Nellie Moore Building to Fellowship Christian Church.
- 1993 -- Dedication of Memorial Windows in addition. Second Capital Campaign which included air conditioning the sanctuary.
- 1995 -- Marjorie Murphy retired as church secretary after 18 years. Lori Scott began as church secretary. Building Loan paid off, \$356,000. Mortgage burning of education addition.
- 1996 -- 15 attended worship during a blizzard. Mortgage burning of air conditioning sanctuary and dedication of new pew coverings.
- 1997 -- Several of our members went to Falmouth Christian Church in Kentucky to help rebuild after devastating flood. New Yamaha Grand Piano purchased for \$13,350.
- 1999 -- CWF 50th Anniversary.
- 2000 -- Faithful Planning survey. Sam Venable elected CYF state officer. Church Secretary now known as Administrative Assistant. Worship Center table hand crafted by Charles Lakatos and dedicated as a memorial gift. Yamaha Grand Piano purchased.

- 2001 -- Honorary and Memorial fund guidelines adopted. Permanent Funds Policy developed.**
- 2003 -- Laureen Roe called as associate pastor. Trustees took possession of Charles “Jim” and Mariellen Pettry property donated on death. Seven CYF Members and adult leaders, Laureen Roe and Carol Hart went on a mission trip to help the Ogala Sioux in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Church membership 460. (100 years ago church membership was 491.)**
- 2005- An anonymous donor established a Sabbatical Fund with the Christian Church Foundation.**

**Additional History Highlights for 190th Homecoming Celebration
Compiled by Helen Starkey, Church Historian**

- 2007 -- The two large stained-glass windows were removed and restored for \$35,000 by BeauVerre Riordan Stained Glass Studios in Middletown, Ohio.**
- 2008 -- October, FCC celebrates 180 years of Christian Service and 100 years of ministry at the corner of Walnut and Columbus Streets. Time capsule in the cornerstone of the sanctuary building is opened and contents displayed. A new time capsule is put together and placed in the cornerstone.**
- 2010 -- All property owned by FCC is now on one deed. April, the Rev. Dr. Tom Stephenson became pastor and the family moved into parsonage.**
- 2011 -- A new Advent stand and tube candles purchased. A wall of Bookshelves added in old pastor’s study off the sanctuary for Pastor’s books.**
- 2012 -- Permanent Fund name changed to Disciples Legacy Fund. This is money the church has invested with Church Finance Council in Indianapolis. New Carpet Fund raised \$20,000. Carpet on the main floor of the Christian Education building was replaced for \$11,194.**
- 2013 -- An anonymous donor donated a 5x8 covered trailer which is used on mission trips.**
- 2014 -- Money was raised for the Church to purchase a Ford, 15 passenger Bus, for \$55,000. FCC’s transportation ministry**

provides pick-up and drop-off for church and allows groups to travel together for mission trips, outings, etc.

September, Scholarship Fund established.

2015 -- FCC hosted the premier of “A Requiem for all God’s Children” by Robert J. Haskins during the worship service on March 22nd. Pastor Tom Stephenson, first minister eligible for a 3-month sabbatical.

2016 – Pastor Stephenson becomes Moderator of the Christian Church in Ohio (2 year term).

**A QUARTER CENTURY HISTORY
OF
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
WILMINGTON, OHIO
Written by Donald K. Mertz, pastor**

1978 – 2003 GROWTH IN MINISTRY

The period of time between our 150th and 175th Anniversary can best be interpreted in history as a growth in ministry. As with any Anniversary the 175th is a celebration of 175 years of CONTINUOUS ministry with a faith in the CONTINUING of ministry as we continue under one of our historic phrases, “Faith Journey Towards Tomorrow.”

GROWTH IN MINISTRY OF MISSION

175 years of ministry this congregation has journeyed thus far. All that we are and have today as a congregation is because of the faithful and generous ministry of the congregation of laity and clergy in these past 175 years. Between the 150th and 175th Anniversary there has been an ongoing growth in ministry and mission.

In 1982 the “Spare-A-Dime” offering was initiated on the first Sunday of each month. All the loose dimes that appear in the offering go to help the needy, reminiscent of the Depression era “Hey, Buddy, can you spare a dime...” asking for help. Over the years the annual average of \$650 have helped many people through the Community Care program of the Wilmington Area Ministerial Association and local church emergency fund.

About the same time the donations of food items for the Clinton County Food Cupboard became a weekly offering. When the need for a Homeless Shelter became evident this congregation joined with other churches through the Wilmington Area Ministerial Association to establish a ministry to the homeless. We have had a member serve on the Homeless Shelter board ever since and annually contribute to the shelter through the church’s outreach giving.

In 1983 a tradition was begun to decorate a green tree in the sanctuary on the Second Sunday of Advent with fabric bows while singing Christmas Carols. In the early 90's another tradition became an annual event of placing under the tree hats, gloves, mittens and scarves to be donated to area school children. The Living Christians Sunday School Class provides a Christmas Card delivery service.

In the early 90's Mary Wall suggested a mission project to the Christian Women's Fellowship to have twice a year - in April and October – a clothing give-away, which continues as mission outreach to the community.

A work crew from our congregation went to Falmouth, Kentucky, in 1997 several times to help clean and repair the Disciple church that was damaged by a flood. Several of our men have worked on several Habitat for Humanity houses as well as the church's outreach giving for this mission project.

Begun in 1994 by the Outreach Committee, each Christmas fifty children are adopted from the Angel Tree to receive gifts from members of the congregation who shop for their adopted Angel with a fifty dollar limit for gifts given.

The Disciple Men adopted the Heifer Project as their Mission project and over the years have given enough for an Ark of Animals and a few heifers.

The Christian Women's Fellowship continues their mission gifts to various ministries. The Sunday School and Youth Groups have various fund raising activities for mission projects. The congregation, through regular giving, special day offering and Week of Compassion, continues to grow in mission awareness. In fact, while paying off indebtedness for our capital campaigns in record time, we also increased giving to missions, thus realizing a great faith lesson that the more we give the more we are able to give even more.

Much of what can be said about a church's history is that, day in and day out, ministry is being done in various ways with one event adding and encouraging another. So, it has been with events, highlights and tidbits of history such as the following:

- Youth Sunday worship services and Children's programs;
- Fellowship carry-in dinners, skating parties, square dancing, family fun days, caroling parties, outings to La Comedia, Cane Ridge and Bethany;
- Flamingos in someone's yard, a Christian Youth fund (fun) raiser;
- First Christian Clowns
- CWF Sacrificial Services, Holiday Teas, Service Days and Funeral meals; Mother / Daughter Banquet; May Breakfast; Laity Sunday;
- Model Railroad set up in basement of sanctuary building with open house each year;
- Blizzard of January 7, 1996 with fifteen in worship;
- Good Samaritan Taxi Service;
- CWF Celebrates 50th Anniversary in 1999;
- Marjorie Murphy retires April 1995 with eighteen years of faithful service as Church Secretary;
- Lori Scott begins as Church Secretary June, 1995 and is named Administrative Assistant in 2002;
- Faithful Planning Process in 2000 resulting in church motto:
 "Growing Our Faith Through Actions Of Christian Love"; Handbook of Ministry written; Permanent Fund Policy adopted March, 2001; Associate pastor, Lauren Roe called October 2002; And Young Adult Bible Study Group formed.
- Youth participating in Camp Christian; attending United Nations Seminar; serving as District and State officers and as Girl-Co President of Wilmington Conference; Mission trip to South Dakota;
- Disciple Men meet monthly for dinner and program and attend District Men's Rally each March.

In 1978 at the 150th Anniversary, Dr. David Felty was pastor serving until October 1980. David Harper and Edgar Henning served as Interim Pastors until Donald K. Mertz was called as pastor September 1, 1981. He and his wife, Frances, and sons, John and Mike, have made Wilmington their home ever since. Associate Pastor

Laureen Roe began her ministry with us in January, 2003, our 175th year.

The real history of the church is of people faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ who love one another. As we celebrate 175 years of CONTINUOUS ministry, we do so with faith that our ministry CONTINUES on with a history yet to unfold. May it always be said that we lived our motto: “Growing Our Faith Through Actions of Christian Love.”

GROWTH IN FAITH

“Faith Journey Towards Tomorrow” was the theme of the capital campaign to build the administrative and educational building to the sanctuary building. This was a faith event that became the apex of the past twenty-five years that marked the turning point in Faith and a Growth in Ministry.

In the late 1980’s it became apparent that having Sunday School in the Nellie Moore Memorial Building and worship in the Sanctuary a block away with few off street parking spaces and both buildings not handicapped accessible was a liability to doing ministry and growth to reach out to the community. In 1988 a Study and Plans Committee was formed to consider the best course of action. Following a thorough study and suggestions by several consultants, the “Faith Journey Towards Tomorrow” was launched with a capital campaign, the first in almost ninety years and which exceeded the initial goal. Bruce Henry was Chairman of the Building Committee; Nate Baker was architect and Kapp Construction was the contractor. During 1991 and early 1992 the new addition was constructed with move-in and dedication in May, 1992. The cost of construction and furnishing was a little over a half a million dollars and was paid off in record time through faithful and generous contributions to the “Faith Fund” and Memorial Gifts. During the second Capital Campaign the 1993 to retire the debt, the cost of air conditioning the sanctuary was also added. This indebtedness was paid off within two years with a celebrative Mortgage Burning Ceremony celebrated in 1996. At our 170th Anniversary on November 1998, in a “Faith Journey Continues” campaign, the congregation gave over and above the goal needed to expand the parking lot by purchasing adjacent property on the south side of the sanctuary and blacktopping the new area. During all this building

activity and giving over and above regular giving, additional gifts were given along with Memorial gifts. These gifts resulted in stained glass windows for the Narthex and Library; pews upholstered; sanctuary carpeted; computer system for church office; grand piano dedicated; new choir robes; choir area remodeled and new upholstered chairs added; vinyl siding was installed at the parsonage along with a new furnace and air conditioning installed at parsonage; Chalice hymnals dedicated; new communion ware, home communion kits and two sets of pewter candlesticks dedicated; hand crafted worship center table dedicated; and Courtyard fence dedicated. In the “Book of Remembrance” in the Narthex are the names of those for whom Memorial Gifts and In Honor Gifts have been given.

A Beautification Committee enhances the church buildings with beautiful flower beds each year providing for a warm welcome to any who enter to worship and provides a pleasing and positive aesthetic appearance to anyone passing by the church.

The Nellie Moore Memorial Building, a gift to the church by Huston Moore in Memory of his daughter Nellie, served our congregation for seventy-eight years. It was sold to the Wilmington Fellowship Christian Church to continue its religious purpose.

From the “Faith Journey Towards Tomorrow” there grew other expressions of faith, giving and missions. The new addition was seen as a tool for ministry. A “New Life Committee” was formed to discover ways to encourage new life and revitalization of the congregation. A renewed enthusiasm for children and youth ministry developed within the Sunday School, youth groups and more youth participation in Camp Christian. A Summer Sunday School program of having Vacation Bible School each Sunday for two-hour sessions was well received and repeated every year since inception. On two occasions for one year each we employed a seminary student to minister to our youth. John Christianson and Sean Ransom added much to our ministry, but we realized we needed an Associate Pastor to grow this ministry. Out of the Faithful Planning Process in 2000, the planning and search for an Associate Pastor intensified. On October 13, 2002, we called Lauren Roe to be our first Associate Pastor. Lauren began in January 2003. Together with husband, Mark, and sons, Corey and Collin, Lauren is making positive contributions to the growth in ministry. One such event was the Youth Mission Trip to South Dakota in June, 2003.

The funding for the new position of Associate Pastor was combined with a three-year capital campaign for Camp Christian called

a “Growth in Ministry,” with gifts over and above regular giving for a three-year period. The Camp Christian part of this campaign is another first for this congregation to join with other Disciple congregations in the Christian Church in Ohio to give substantially to Camp Christian.

Out of the “Faithful Planning Process,” came our church motto: “Growing Our Faith Through Actions of Christian Love,” which continues to inspire our ministries. As we celebrate 175 years of CONTINUOUS ministry, we also CONTINUE the “Faith Journey Towards Tomorrow” with a desire to “Grow Our Faith Through Actions Of Christian Love.” In this, our 175th year, we seek to grow spiritually through a “Grow in Spirit” Covenant by which we covenant to grow in prayer, service, giving and spirit. Such a covenant is based upon simple prayers:

Grow in Prayer: “Lord, what do you want us to do?”

Grow in Service: “Lord, what can we do for you?”

Grow in Giving: “Lord, may we trust in your care to grow our gifts.”

Grow in Spirit: “Lord, we covenant with you to grow spiritually through prayer, service and giving.”

As we pray these prayers, listen for God’s direction and grow spiritually; through faith and trust in God, we can continue “Reverence for the Past and Hope for the Future.”

GROWTH IN MUSIC MINISTRY

Next to the Lord’s Supper, music is a central part of the worship experience. The organ sets the cadence for worship with leading in hymn singing, accompanying the choir and offering gifts of music to God through the Prelude, Gloria Patri, Offertory, Doxology and Postlude. Organist Mickey Young has been giving her gift of music since 1963. Other organists who play occasionally are Jim Haskins, Bruce Henry and Shelley Keiter.

The Music Directorship has been given by the husband and wife team of Jim and Elizabeth Haskins. Jim served 1977 to 1988 and Elizabeth is serving currently since 1988. Besides directing the Chancel Choir during September through May, the Music Director arranges guest soloists and musicians for Sunday Worship during the summer months. A highlight of the music ministry is the annual Sermon in

Music that includes all choirs and musicians within the congregation. The worship of music also plays a key role in the Christmas Eve and Maundy Thursday services.

Over the years many musicians too numerous to list have shared their talent, vocal or instrumental, with the congregation. The gift of music has greatly enhanced our worship service.

Jim and Elizabeth Haskins have also extended their gifts of composition. Some of Jim's compositions especially for church worship include:

“Trial and Crucifixion According to St. John” -- April 1985

“The Annunciation, Birth and Childhood of our Lord Jesus Christ” - 1996

“The Magnificat”

“The King Shall Come” – choral anthem

Numerous pieces for instrumental ensembles

A Set of organ preludes

Elizabeth has composed for worship:

Numerous hymn descants and introits

10 choral anthems

2 chorale concertantes

“God's Grace” – for handbells

“O Lord of My Heart” for alto saxophone and piano

“Child of Love” for two treble voices, flute and piano

Since 1999, each summer Jim Haskins has coordinated three or four Vesper musical programs in the sanctuary, many of which have included First Christian musicians.

The Children's Choir has always been well received in worship with this choir singing the first Sunday, October through May, and other special occasions. Over the past twenty-five years the following have directed the children's choir: Jane Felty, Martha Campbell, Karen Perry, Cheri Marsh Honnerlaw, Kathy Keltner and currently Shelley Keiter.

The Handbell Choir came into existence with a gift of handbells dedicated in 1984. Barry Campbell was the first director with the current director, Lori Scott, beginning in 1990. Besides leading worship on the third Sunday, September through May, and other special

occasions, the Handbell Choir has shared their gift of music in annual handbell choir festivals and with groups and settings other than at church. Lori Scott has written arrangements for handbells as well as for saxophone, her major musical instrument.

Since 1994 , the Elders have led ten Hymn Sing worship services highlighting many favorite hymns. In 1987, the “Christian Worship Hymnal” was purchased and dedicated. Then in 1998, the “Chalice Hymnal” was purchased and dedicated to keep hymn singing an important part of worship.

In the mid 1980’s the pipe organ was rebuilt with Jim Haskins serving as organ consultant in the rebuilding process. Organist Mickey Young and an Organ Fund Committee worked long and hard in various fundraising projects to join with generous gifts from within the congregation to pay for the rebuilding of the historic organ.

In similar fashion Mickey Young again in 1996 spearheaded a fundraising project for a Yamaha Grand Piano. Once again the congregation generously responded. At the Dedication of the grand piano, October 1997, an organ and piano concert was given by Mickey on the organ and Ruth Ann Faris on the piano. The duet has played many times since as part of the ongoing gift of music.

Since the Growth in Music Ministry has been such an essential part of our worshipping and celebrating God’s presence, it is appropriate for our 175th Anniversary celebration for us to commission Jim and Elizabeth Haskins to compose music for this historic occasion. During worship on October 26, the premier of “We Call Ourselves Disciples” composed by Elizabeth Haskins and “Church Sonata #1 for Instrumental Ensemble” composed by Jim Haskins will be the center point of worshipful celebration of the ministry of music.

The history of a congregation is never finished. As we celebrate 175 years of CONTINUOUS ministry we also dedicate ourselves to CONTINUING ministry by “Growing Our Faith Through Actions Of Christian Love” as we covenant with God to Grow in Prayer, Service, Giving and Spiritually in order to continue the “Faith Journey Towards Tomorrow.”

PASTORAL SUCCESSION

T. J. Melish	April 1851, – April, 1852
John C. Ashley	October, 1852 – May, 1856
William Patterson	January, 1858 – September, 1858
E. H. Hawley	October, 1858 – January, 1860
D. Egan	January, 1860 – June, 1860
	June, 1860 – June, 1864 -- Dark Days
C. Irvine	June, 1864 - 1865
T. D. Garvin	July, 1865 – November, 1869
W. G. Irvine	November, 1869 – December, 1871
S. H. Bingaman	January, 1872 – December, 1874
W. S. Tingey	March, 1875 – April, 1876
A. A. Knight	April, 1877 - 1880
Carroll Ghent	January, 1880 – April, 1881
C. G. Bartholomew	May, 1882 – December 1882
W. D. Moore	February, 1883 – April, 1886
George Anderson	May 9, 1886 – June 10, 1886
J. B. Knowles	October, 1886 – December, 1887
W. C. Sayrs	January, 1888 – December, 1888
Gay Waters	January, 1889 – July, 1890
Enos Campbell	August, 1890 – February, 1891
F. M. Green	March 1891 – April, 1896
W. A. Roush	May, 1896 – May, 1898
A. B. Griffith	May, 1898 – October, 1899
W. C. Sayrs	November, 1899 – July, 1900
E. J. Meacham	August, 1900 – March, 1908
*J. M. Gordon	March, 1908 – March 1, 1910
*E. S. DeMiller	October 1, 1910 – May 16, 1920
*Lloyd H. Miller	July 18, 1920 – May 1, 1921
**W. S. Houchins	September, 1909 – October, 1911
**E. B. Buffington	October, 1911 – October, 1914
**R. J. Bennett	October, 1914 - 1915
**R. L. Porter	1915 – May, 1921
J. A. Long	November 6, 1921 – January 6, 1926
L. E. Brown	April 18, 1926 – September 4, 1926
A. H. Wilson	December 13, 1926 – July 4, 1937
O. L. Hull	1937 - 1947
Otha R. Clary	September 14, 1947 – June 1, 1952
Herman M. Patton	September 1, 1952 – April 1, 1963

A. H. Wilson (Interim)	April 7, 1963 – August 15, 1963
Randall Griffith	August 18, 1963 – September 1, 1968
W. C. Foster (Interim)	September 1, 1968 – February 9, 1969
Richard Weller	February 16, 1969 – August 1, 1974
William Arthur (Interim)	August 1, 1974 – January 5, 1975
Dr. David Felty	January 7, 1975 – October 19, 1980
David Harper (Interim)	October 20, 1980 – March 22, 1981
Edgan Henning (Interim)	April 5, 1981 – June 28, 1981
Donald K. Mertz	September 1, 1981 – May 2006
John Christianson	August 1993 – May 1994
(Seminary Student serving as Youth Pastor)	
Sean Ransom	August 1999 – May 2000
(Seminary Student serving as Youth Pastor)	
Laureen A. Roe (Associate)	January 23, 2003 – January 2006
Jeffrey L. Bartlett (Interim)	July 2006 – December 2007
Jane L. Stout	January 1, 2008 – April 26, 2009
Nik Donges (Interim)	July 2009 – April 11, 2010
Tom Stephenson	April 18, 2010 – Present
Brian Carr	June 1, 2015 – August 31, 2015
(Sabbatical Supply Pastor)	

*** - Central Christian Church Ministers**

**** - Walnut Street Church of Christ Ministers**

Note: The dates for the period 1851 – 1900 are taken from a yearbook of the church published in 1904.

ELDERS LISTED IN OLD BOOK 2 – 1888-1907

**Frank D. Blair
James F. Bennett
E. J. Meacham
William Miller
Linley Moon
William C. Sayrs
William Smithson
F. B. Tomlin
J. B. Vandervort**

ELDERS LISTED IN OLD BOOK 3 1907 - 1922

**John Ault
G. M. Bonta
John Cashman
E. S. DeMiller
J. M. Gordon
Earl Harris
Ed Johnson
J. C. Linton
E. J. Meacham
William Miller
Linley Moon
F. P. Sayrs, Sr.
F. P. Sayrs, Jr.
Allen Smith
William Smithson
F. B. Tomlin
J. B. Vandervort
Charles A. Ward**

FIRST CHRISTIAN ELDERS

From 1970 to 2018

*** Denotes Elder Emeritus**

**Keith Adams
William Arthur
John Ault*
Ron Babcock
Maynard Borton*
Nanetta Bradley
Jeanne Brightman
John Brightman
Virginia Buckley*
Martha Campbell
Willard Carrol*
Helen Conner*
Cynthia Curtis
Helen Louise Curtis*
Donna Dailey*
John Dailey*
Joseph Daniel*
Gene Doyle
Cathy Farkas
Ralph Farkas
Scott Farkas
Ruth Ann Faris
James Foland*
James Frank
Howard Garman
Robert J. Haskins*
Paul Hayes
Greg Hlatky
Bruce Henry
Dave Henry
Beulah Hill*
Harry Hill*
Kenneth Hill
Lee Howell**

**Ellis Inlow*
Walter Inlow*
Dale Inwood*
James Jewell
V. C. Kier*
Edward Keiter*
Mike Keiter
Karl Kerr*
Shirley Lakatos*
Sandra Leslie
Lou Ann Arnold-Lind
Nancy Marconett*
Sue Markle
Olive Mathews
Steve McClain
Hubert Murphy
Maxwell Murphy*
Suzann Murphy*
Glenn Orr
Charles Pettry*
George Pidgeon*
Sandy Pidgeon
Arthur Pohlmeier
Harry Schultz*
Missy Satchwell
Tim Swicegood
Frank Tenor*
Gary Thatcher
Forrest Tucker*
James Venable
Mary Wall*
Veda Williams***

CWF PAST PRESIDENTS

1949-1951	--	Ruth Pidgeon
1951-1953	--	Mary Louise Foland
1953-1955	--	Anna Mae Inlow
1955-1957	--	Olive Mathews
1957-1959	--	Alice Borton
1959-1961	--	Helen Conner
1961-1963	--	Helen Starr
1963-1965	--	Frances Irvin
1965-1967	--	Mary Schultz
1967-1969	--	Marjorie Murphy
1969-1971	--	Ruth Hill
1971-1973	--	Suzann Murphy
1973-1975	--	Virginia Buckley
1975-1977	--	Janie Hamm
1977-1979	--	Sandra Pidgeon
1979-1981	--	Sue Markle
1981-1983	--	Mary Wall
1983-1985	--	Doris Florea
1985-1987	--	Kay Collins
1987-1989	--	Susan Henry
1989-1991	--	Beulah Hill
1991-1993	--	Helen Louise Curtis
1993-1995	--	Shirley Lakatos
1995-1997	--	Frances Mertz
1997-1999	--	Phyllis Newton
1999-2000	--	Kathy Keltner
2000-2001	--	Veda Mae Williams
2001-2003	--	Lou Ann Arnold
2003-2005		Martha Campbell
2006-2007		Sandy Leslie
2008-2009		Penny Meredith
2010-2011		Cynthia Curtis
2012-2013		Nan Bradley
2014-2015		Sandy Leslie
2016-2017		Susan Henry
2018-Present		Martha Campbell



**Past Ministers who visited during the 125th Anniversary Celebration
 From Left to Right: Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Benlehr, Mr. & Mrs. O. L. Hull, Mr. & Mrs. J. A. Long, Mr. & Mrs. Herman Patton, Mr. & Mrs. Bert (A. H.) Wilson, Mr. & Mrs. Otha Clary**



Photo at left: Rev. & Mrs. Richard (Alice) Weller with their children Trent and Ainsley.



**The Rev. Clary Family
with the car given to
them by the
congregation of First
Christian Church.**



**CWF PAST PRESIDENTS ATTENDING
CWF 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

**Left to Right, Front Row: Kay Collins, Alice Borton, Ruth Pidgeon,
Ruth Hill, Helen Louise Curtis. Back Row: Beulah Hill, Shirley
Lakatos, Marjorie Murphy, Mary Wall, Helen Conner, Sue Markle,
Frances Mertz, Kathy Keltner.**



ELDERS' CARRY-IN – SEPTEMBER 17, 1998

Left to Right, Front Row: Helen Conner, Maxwell Murphy, Harry Hill, Ellis Inlow, George Pidgeon. Second Row: Virginia Buckley, Mary Wall, Donna Dailey, Beulah Hill, Helen Louise Curtis, Shirley Lakatos, Sandra Leslie, Suzann Murphy. Third Row: Rev. Don Mertz, Karl Kerr, Ed Keiter, Hubert “Sam” Murphy, John Dailey, Kenneth Hill, Dale Inwood, Jim Foland, James Frank, Bruce Henry, Jim Pettry, Arthur Pohlmeier, Robert “Jim” Haskins, Gene Doyle, Bill Arthur.



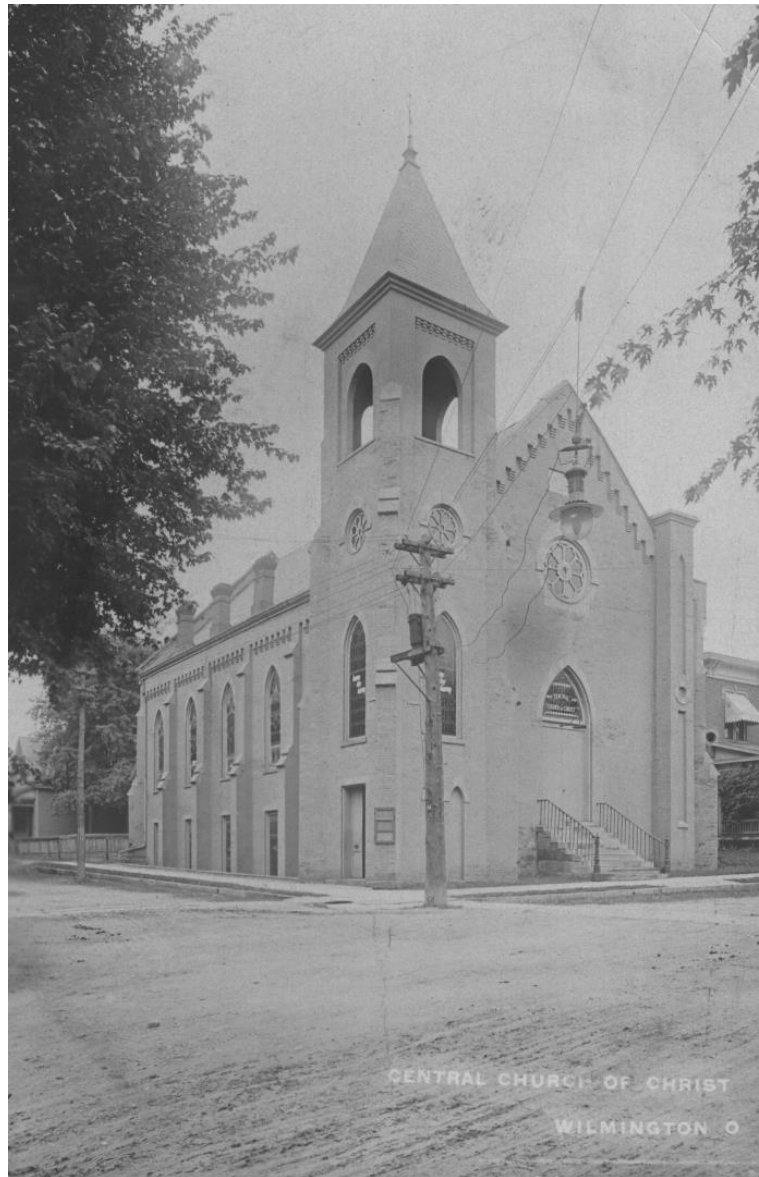
Photo at left: Dr. David and Jane Felty with daughter, Jessica Annette. (October 1980)



Nellie Moore Memorial Building located at the corner of Columbus and North South Streets.



The photo at the left is dated May 5, 1905. The lady pictured is Nellie Moore for whom the Nellie Moore Memorial Building (in the photo above) is named.



The photo above is of Central Christian Church which was located on the corner of Columbus and North South Streets where the Nellie Moore Memorial Building now stands.



June 30, 1991 was ground breaking day for the new education building. Left to Right: Nathaniel “Nate” Baker, Architect; Randy Kapp, General Contractor; Virginia Buckley, Chairman of the Board; Bruce Henry, Chairman of Building Committee; Donald “Don” K. Mertz, Pastor.



Photo at left is of Rev. Herman and Helen Patton.



The photo above is of the back side of the old Kirk Music building that stood on the south side of the church.



Photo above: “And the Walls Came a Tumblin’ Down!!!” Ed Keiter, John Dailey, Sam Murphy, Charlie Lakatos and Mike Keiter work to remove the old Kirk Music building to open up the view of the south side of the church building and to create more parking.

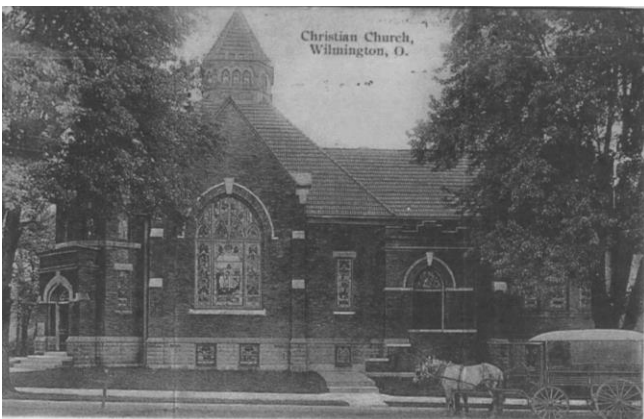
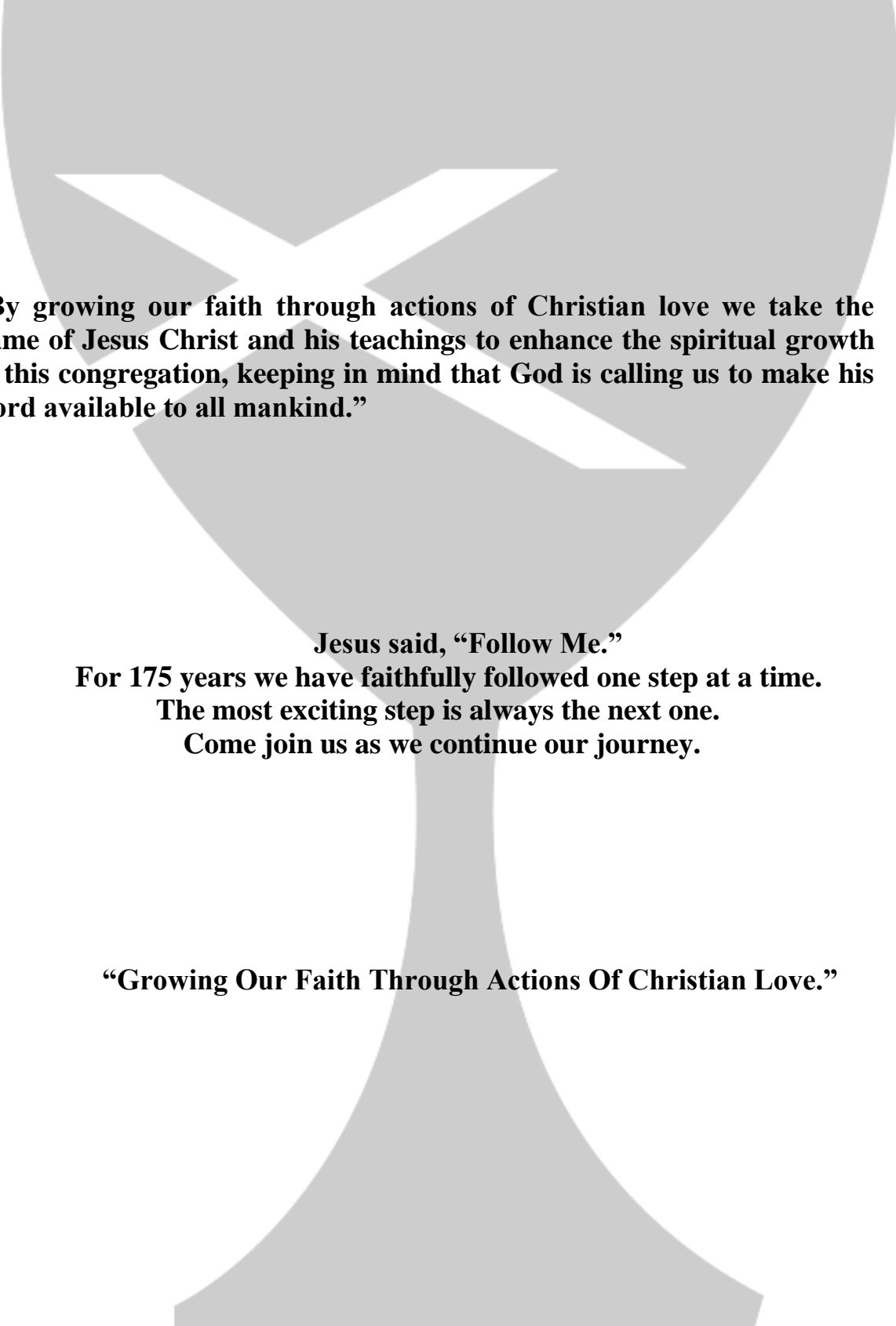


Photo at left: A view of the church from the Walnut Street side, circa 1916. Could this be a hearse parked along side the building?



“By growing our faith through actions of Christian love we take the name of Jesus Christ and his teachings to enhance the spiritual growth of this congregation, keeping in mind that God is calling us to make his word available to all mankind.”

Jesus said, “Follow Me.”

For 175 years we have faithfully followed one step at a time.

The most exciting step is always the next one.

Come join us as we continue our journey.

“Growing Our Faith Through Actions Of Christian Love.”