

History Notes, Paragon Christian Church, Church Street, Paragon, Morgan County, Indiana

A BRIEF HISTORY OF
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Paragon, Indiana

Compiled by
Mrs. Florence H. Hodges
And Presented at
Centennial Services
May 16, 1954

Foreword

There are no official records available containing the history of the Paragon Christian Church, so, with the help of the Centennial Committee (Vinton Bradshaw, Mrs. Lula Beggeman, Carl Deck, Mrs. Lee Arthur, Mrs. Glen Grounds and Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Wershing) I have compiled this booklet by securing information from several sources, using public records, newspaper files and the memories of people who have had historical information passed on to them.

There are important facts omitted, but the writing of this history was only that of reporting what I was able to find, and as far as I am able to ascertain, it is authentic.

Mrs. Florence H. Hodges.
Paragon, Indiana
May 16, 1954

PARAGON CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Paragon Christian Church traces its origin from the Old Union Church in Owen County, Indiana, the ruins of which stood near Lake Hollybrook. When the pioneers migrated eastward into Morgan County they brought the influence of this Church with them. The congregation met for services in the homes of its members; one of the favorite meeting places was the home of Philip and Polly Hodges, which stood two miles west of Paragon.

Organization--Charter Members

The Church was organized in 1852. The Elders appointed were: Bartholomew Pearson, Thomas O. Wilson and Philip Hodges. James Blankenship was the first pastor, and he was assisted by his brother, Perry M. Blankenship.

The charter members listed are: Thomas Wilson, Philip and Polly Hodges, Ephriam Hodges, Andrew Whitesitt, Ephriam and Sally Goss, P.M. Blankenship and family. The first protracted meeting was conducted by James and Perry Blankenship, with the assistance of the Reverend U. C. Brewer. Dr. John Kennedy was the first addition during this meeting.

According to reports, the following names include those of the "first generation" members who were prominent in the life of the Church: Hiram Myers, Daniel Voshell, Scott W. Young, Andrew Fletcher, John Pearson, the Vickreys, Isaac and William Baker.

Church Site Given

As reported by the late Mrs. Harlan Hodges, in the year 1858, P.M. Blankenship gave a plot of ground in Paragon for a Church building. A frame structure was built on this ground on the site of the former home of W.E. Guy and family and now occupied by his son, Gail Guy and family.

Philip Hodges was the greatest financial benefactor of the early Church.

Isaac Errett of Cincinnati was called to preach the dedicatory sermon. When the Church was dedicated it had a deficit of \$600. Rather than start out with an encumbrance of so much, Thomas Wilson, Philip and

Ephriam Hodges each agreed to pay \$200 more than their subscription called for.

Dwelling for Minister

The Martinsville Reporter, issue of February 12, 1874, published this account of the Church: "The Christian Church at Paragon has at last employed a minister, Bro. Hough, who has assumed his labors. The members, we understand, have also purchased a dwelling for the accomodation of the ministers hereafter employed by the Church. The Church has been languishing for some time. This Church represents as much wealth as any Church in the state, outside of Indianapolis, and we are glad that they have returned to their first love and wish how successful the newly installed minister may be in his labor of love."

In his book, Disciples of Christ in Morgan County, Lawrence Mains quotes The Peoples Guide, published in 1874, as follows: "Pastor Wm. A. Hough is Sunday School superintendent. Membership of the Paragon Christian Church is now 100, with an average attendance of 75. Value of the Church property is \$3,000."

Mathes Engaged

Quoting again from the Martinsville Reporter of April 1, 1875, we read: "The parsonage is still unoccupied." From the same source the following statements are taken: April 29, 1875, "The Christian Church is to be painted. This is very much needed, not only to save the building, but to look more respectable." June 24, 1875, "At the preaching of the funeral of Mr. Hodges by James Mathes of Bedford, Sunday, June 14, the Christian Church was filled. The members are making an effort to secure the services of Mr. Mathes each month during the summer, at least." January 16, 1879, "Rev. Mr. Hopper is holding a succession of meetings at the Christian Church. There

is a good time and sleighing is good and the evenings light."

New Church Site

In 1890, the main and durable parts of the old Church building were moved from the site of 1858 to the present location. The land for this new site was donated by P.M. (Tobe) Blankenship. The whole structure was remodeled, reseated, relighted and new stoves were installed.

In January, 1891, shortly after the building was dedicated, Rev. D. R. Van Buskirk, pastor of the Third Christian Church, Indianapolis, held an evangelistic meeting in the Church, with more than 100 additions to the membership. The largest number of additions at any meeting was in 1904, when Rev. Yocum conducted a three weeks meeting.

The old Church proved to be inadequate to fill the wants of the members, so plans were made to remodel it. The work was begun in the fall of 1912, with Joseph Davee, Senator D.P. Smith and J.C. Hodges as trustees. The elders at the time were Dr. John Kennedy and Ephriam Hodges, who at the time was the only living charter member of the Church. The deacons were Paul Beggeman, Charles Hodges and E. M. Bolin. The building committee was Perry Fletcher, Joseph Davee, Charles Hodges, Mrs. D. P. Smith, Mrs. Paul Beggeman, Mrs. H.H. Kirby and Mrs. J.A. Blankenship.

Improvements Made

During the ministry of W.R. Jennett, the Church building was raised and a basement was built. The basement was later furnished with a kitchen and social room. The Boy Scouts and the Young Men's Class contributed the building of the two classrooms.

The Fidelis Class, under the leadership of its teacher, Mrs. Ralph J. Wershing, began the construction of a classroom in the basement of the Church in the Fall of 1951. In December, 1953, the room was completely finished and furnished with pine paneling, floor tile, gas heater and chairs.

Gus Abbott gave the light fixtures, which are presently in use. Mrs. Julia Earle gave the pulpit, chairs and settee in memory of Dr. John Earle. Charles and Mattie Hodges gave the large Bible for the pulpit, the communion table and the piano.

Emily Cunningham and daughters gave the communion service that we still use. Also Ralph Smith and Paul Beggeman gave the first collection plates, which were in use until 1946, when the present plates were bought. These plates are made of myrtle wood which came from the Holy Land.

H. H. Kirby set out the trees in the yard and his children watered them. B. W. Woods made and gave the wrought iron for the steps at the front of the Church. William Ross, with the help of B. W. Woods, gave the wooden racks to hold the communion glasses. Myron Abbott gave the electric clock. Maurice Canatsey bought, and Howard Goss installed the flood light for the Church grounds.

All through the years the people have given freely of the time and money for the needs of the physical property of the church.

Church Membership

Through the 100 years of history of the Church there have been approximately 930 people who have united with and taken membership in the fellowship of this Church. Of this number, 379 are deceased, 124 have transferred their membership to other Churches,

245 live in other communities but maintain their membership, and 182 live in the area of Church influence.

Music has always played an important part in the history of the Church. Perry Dow served as choir leader for many years, during which time he also conducted a Church orchestra. In recent years, Mrs. Orville Meadows, Mrs. Ralph Wershing, Mrs. Mabel Clare Arthur, Mrs. Howard Goss, Mrs. Glenn Grounds and Mrs. James Jones have led the musical programs of the Church.

A Baldwin electronic organ was purchased and installed in the church April 25, 1954. It was paid for by freewill donations. Dr. James Farr served as chairman of the organ committee.

Ladies' Aid Society

The Ladies' Aid has worked faithfully through the years. They earned money to install two furnaces in the Church; they purchased kitchen equipment; they have always stood ready with financial help for building repairs, aid with minister's salary and support for missionary causes of the Brotherhood.

Youth Organizations

There have been many youth organizations of the Church. A Boy Scout troop was organized by R. J. Wershing and has been functioning in its program of training young manhood for the past thirty years. There has generally been a Christian Endeavor and in later years a Christian Youth Fellowship which meets on Sunday nights for the benefit of worship, discussion and fellowship for the young people of the Church. The pastors have usually been the leaders of this activity.

Mr. Mains reports in his book the incident of the organization of the Union Christian Church of Jefferson Township in 1875. J. R. Sloan and members of the Paragon Christian Church had a part in that occasion.

Mrs. Mattie Hodges Tireless Worker

The Church has always been outstanding in its emphasis upon religious education. One of the early leaders was Mrs. Mattie Hodges, who exerted influence not only in her own community and Church, but also promoted such work in the county and at Bethany Park, where leadership training schools were held. For many years she taught women's and girls' classes in Sunday School. Former students of hers now live in nearly every state in the Union. With her assistance the first Sunday School was organized about the year 1875, with Daniel C. Byram as superintendent. The present superintendent is Glen Grounds.

For many years there has been a Children's Department of the Church. Superintendents for this department have been Mrs. Ruth Marley, Betty Scudder, Mrs. Hubert McDaniel, Mrs. Ralph Wershing, Mrs. Paul Kitley, and the present superintendent, Edward Callahan. Sunday School enrollment at the present writing is 122.

Vacation Bible School

Rev. Wales Smith organized the first Daily Vacation Bible School, and now the Christian and Baptist Churches in Paragon unite to hold a two week School annually.

New Parsonage

Because of a lifetime of activity and interest, Mr. Joseph C. Hodges bequeathed \$500.00 to the Church. This was used in the purchase of a parsonage from

Frank Dow in 1948. Rev. Paul Kitley occupied this house during his ministry here and following his leaving, it was sold.

In July, 1953, a house and three lots were bought from Ivan Shake at a cost of \$8,300.00. This continues as the present parsonage.

During the years of Church organization, there have been two ministers ordained by the Church. They were: Howard Kauffman, on June 3, 1928, and Paul Kitley, on May 22, 1949.

Reverend Joseph Burns helped to re-organize the Official Board of the Church in 1949, during which time Elders and Deacons were ordained for service.

The Church has had the privilege of giving opportunity to many young ministers who were students at Butler University, as they served this Church as pastor. Many baptized their first candidates, preached their first funeral service and performed their first marriage ceremony.

Ministers Serving Since 1910

With the help of the late Mrs. Mattie Hodges and Mrs. Harlan Hodges, we have been able to substantiate the record of ministers of this Church as found in the Year Book of the Disciples of Christ, beginning with the year 1910. They are as follows:

1910--E. B. Schofield	1917--Trial Preachers
1910--L. H. Graham,	1918--R. R. Bulgin (5 mos.)
(Revival)	1920--Mr. Cox & Mr. Wheeler,
1911--Frank Davidson	Revival Preachers
1912--William Fredrick	1921--
1913--W. R. Jennett	1922--Charles Shiplet
1914--Harry Lott	1923--Mr. Groseclose
1915--	(Revival)
1916--Mr. Scifris	1924--Charles Shiplet

1925--	1940--Kenneth Brady
1926--Mr. Elliott	1941--George Smith
(Revival)	1942--Robert Banks
1927--	1943--Robert Banks
1928--Howard Kauffman	1944--Robert Banks
1929--Howard Kauffman	1945--Joseph Burns
1930--Howard Kauffman	1946--Joseph Burns
1931--Wales Smith	1947--Joseph Burns
1932--Wales Smith	1948--Joseph Burns
1933--Robert Lewis	1949--Paul Kitley
1934--Robert Lewis	1950--Paul Kitley
1935--Robert Lewis	1951--Paul Kitley
1936--Lawrence Maines	1952--Paul Kitley
1937--Lawrence Elshoff	1953--Robert Burton
1938--Lawrence Elshoff	1954--Vinton Bradshaw
1939--Kenneth Brady	

During its 100 year history the Church has had over 75 different ministers who have served its needs in different capacities. Space will not permit a complete listing of these names.

PARAGON CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Vinton D. Bradshaw, Minister

CHURCH BOARD
Carl Deck, Chairman

R.J. Wershing, Secretary Dale Means, Treasurer

ELDERS

I.G. Cramer, Chairman	Eugene Curtis
Dale Means	Glen Grounds

DEACONS

Edward Callahan, Chairman	R. J. Wershing
Carl Deck	Orville Kincaid
Emmett Goss	Lee Vickrey
William Ross	Maurice Canatsey

TRUSTEES

I. G. Cramer

Emmett Goss

Edward Callahan

This history is a continuation of the history prepared by Florence Hodges and the Centennial Committee. It has been compiled with the help of the Bicentennial & 124th Birthday Committee.

Marjorie Ross also helped us go through the Church Board meetings and through the Clerk's records. Faye Deck helped remember the names of some of the church workers.

Bicentennial Committee

Phyllis Walker
Mabel Clare Arthur
Dean Gentry
Ralph Christman

Luke 1:1-3 (New American Standard Bible) "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order," Dear Ones in Christ.

Mabel Clare Arthur
Paragon, Indiana
June 13, 1976

MINISTERS

1897-1898	James Conner	1924	Charles Shiplet
1899	Frank Muse	1925	
1902-1905	Charles Underwood	1926	Mr. Elliott
1905-1906	Allen Beard		(Revival)
1906	W. T. McGowan	1927	
1907	E. W. Brickert	1928-1930	Howard Kauffman
1908	L. W. Sackett	1931-1932	Wales Smith
1909-1910	E. B. Scofield	1933-1935	Robert Lewis
1911	Frank Davidson	1936	Lawrence Maines
1912	William Fredrick	1937-1938	Lawrence Elshoff
1913-1914	W. R. Jennett	1939-1940	Kenneth Brady
1915	Harry Lott	1941	George Smith
1916	Mr. Seifris	1942-1944	Robert Banks
1917	Trial Preachers	1945-1948	Joseph Burns
1918	R. R. Bulgin	1949-1952	Paul Kitley
	(5 mos.)	1952-1953	Robert Burton
1919		1954-1955	Vinton Bradshaw
1920	Mr. Cox, Mr. Wheeler, M. R. Atherton	1956-1959	Wm. Schuermann
		1959-1961	Robert Ordway
1921	M. R. Atherton	1961-1966	Charles Babcock
1922	Charles Shiplet	1966-1969	Bruce Fagerstrom
1923	Mr. Groseclose	1969-1971	James Kelly
	(Revival)	1971	Ralph Christman

Paragon Christian Church

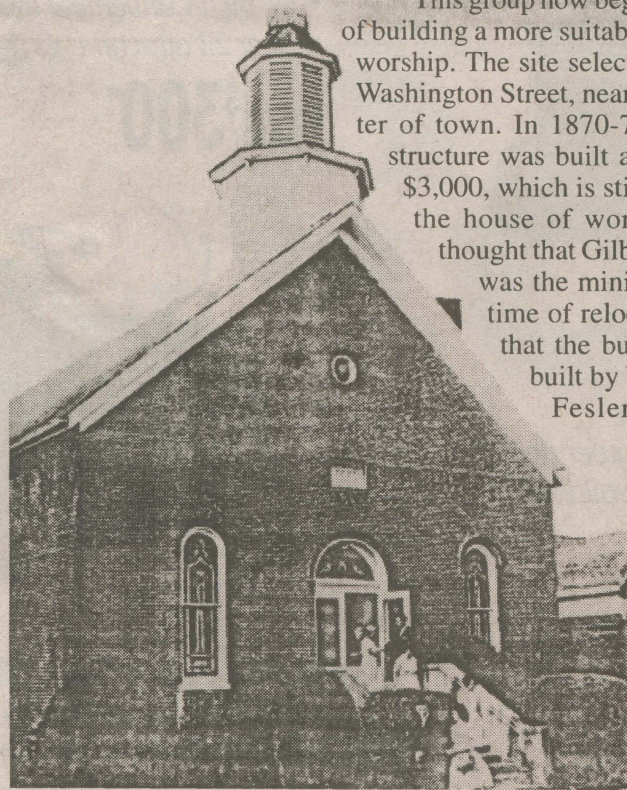


Morgantown Christian Church Served Many During the Years

Early in the 1840's in the small community of Morgantown, the families of John Fesler, Albert Roberts, John Trower and George W. McNought met together in the simplest form of Christian community - the church in the home. Having no sanctuary except for their own homes, they followed the example of the church of the first century, and "broke bread from house to house." The group of followers was small and grew slowly, but they knew the spiritual presence of Jesus who said: "when two or three gather, I will be in their midst."

The first home of this group of Christians was a small log structure on East Washington Street, at the edge of town. Here this group organized a "Sabbath School" which had by 1870, an average attendance of 74. The church membership by this time had grown to 49 members.

This group now began to think of building a more suitable house of worship. The site selected was on Washington Street, nearer the center of town. In 1870-71, a brick structure was built at a cost of \$3,000, which is still in use as the house of worship. It is thought that Gilbert Harney was the minister at this time of relocation, and that the building was built by William H. Fesler. William Robertson was then the superintendent of the Sunday school.



The earliest record book of membership and meetings, dating back to January of 1871, begins with the "reorganization" of the church with 49 members, evidently at the time of moving into the new building. This record shows an average offering at the monthly preaching service to be about \$11.50, while the pastor's salary was recorded at \$10.50. Quite often it was necessary to make up the deficit between the offering and the salary from a small accumulated treasury. Members of the church, recalling conditions they had known and conditions told them by earlier members, tell of the two silver chalices used in the serving of the Lord's Supper. All partaking would drink from one of the two cups, one used for each side. A large silver pitcher was used to refill each chalice when it had been emptied by the communicants.

The present building, housing the church and Sunday school classes, has been remodeled and added to many times. A basement was first added, then later a large fellowship hall was built on the north side.

Among the ministers who have served this church are the Revs. Gilbert Harney, Mr. Hammond, Mr. Morris, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Haan, Aubrey Moore, Harry Davis, Basil Stultz, Lester Groseclose, M.G. Long, E.W. Hammon, W.M. Yocam, R.R. Moss, G. Harvey, Kenneth Ball, Mr. Underwood, Mr. McLaughlin, Luke Bolin, Burdette Charles, Bill Hicks, Ernest Linton, Howard Coffman, Bill Norris, Ora Davis, Glen Tudor, Clarence Davis, John Wallace and R. Fred Smith. Many influential members have served here in this church.

But, in the final analysis, a Church is more than history. Its claim to existence lies in its present action and present service. For, all of the 154 years history has its focal point in our day, upon the contemporary community. And, thru the descendants of those who preceded us and thru the many more added members of the church, "these being dead yet speak." For surely God is still in this place!

27 Apr 2000

M and M-Churdhes (*Others*)
Martinsville Daily Reporter
January 10, 1967



THE MOUNT GILEAD Church in Jefferson Township is shown when Rev. Downey, father of Lillie Van Metre, was minister. She is formerly of Mooresville and now lives in Greenfield.

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 Mt. Gilliad Christian Church

Madison Township

Lawrence Mains quotes from a history written by Miss Kate Watson who had old books of Mt. Gilliad Church. March 22¹⁸³⁵ a group of pioneers met in a school house on Sinking Creek, owned by Lowell Summers. There was dissatisfaction with the Friendship church so a new constitution was written. They called it Church of Christ at Mt. Gilead built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ the chief corner stone. There were 18 names signing this, and two weeks later there was an organization. The first four years the congregation met in the log cabin of Thomas McNabb on the "yellow farmhouse farm." County deed records of May 22 1835 show this plot as section 3 range 2 east of township 13., about two miles north of a later location. The first house was destroyed by fire and another was built a quarter of a mile from the first. Additional land was given by Samuel Duree Aug 10 1839, possibly for a cemetery. Mrs. Mary McNabb organized the first Sunday School in the 1840's

In 1859 the congregation built a new church. One part of the group wanted to build in the northern part of the community, another the southern. Henry McNabb donated three acres in a compromise location. When a group in eastern part objected because there was no road Mr. Carter circulated a petition for a road. Benjamin and Alexander Park brought their ox team to start the work. John Copeland dug first shovel full of dirt as he did 58 years later when another church was built

In 1968 the name was changed to Church of Christ at Mt. Gilead

A new building was constructed on the congregation held its first meeting June 18 1978

V.F. = Mt. Pleasant Christian Church
Hall, Ind.



Mt. Pleasant Christian Church
Hall Indiana

Hall Christian Church was organized October 21 1832 by Rev H. Woodsmall. Early records are not available but Lawrence Maines quotes from the 1932 centennial celebration of the church. It is believed that people from Kentucky, Ohio, and Virginia and the Carolinas had been meeting in the homes before the above date.. In 1848 Geo Brown donated land on a hill (location of a cemetery) Elijah Allison was carpenter. The log church lasted 12 years when it was destroyed by fire.

Jefferson Woodsmall donated land, ^{deeded} ~~donated~~ to trustees of church. in 1853. A frame building was built with two doors on front, one for men and one for women. There was an A-men corner where church officials sat. Children were on the rostrum at the preacher's feet, were taught not only the gospel but principles of patience as for a 30 minute sermon was unknown at that time.

In 1901 the building was moved to become a private dwelling. A dedication was held Nov 20 1901.