

Disbanded church gives \$250,000 to college

By Douglas Ilka
The Detroit News

The Ferndale Church of Christ closed its doors earlier this year — but the legacy of the tiny congregation will live on with a record gift to the Michigan Christian College.

Church members agreed to donate \$250,000 to help the small liberal arts college in Rochester Hills build a new residence hall.

"We simply wanted to pass along the blessings that came from the efforts of hundreds of people who worked and worshiped at the Ferndale Church of Christ over the past 73 years," said J.B. Reaves, a longtime church member.

College officials were delighted with the gift.

"The Ferndale members have shown their commitment toward helping young people receive a Christian education," said Mark Davis, the college's vice-president for advancement.

"Thousands of future MCC students will call the Ferndale Residence Hall their home as they prepare for their chosen occupations."

Formed in 1923 by a group from Hamilton Church of Christ in

Detroit, Ferndale Church of Christ built a facility on Hilton Road in Ferndale.

"At one time, Ferndale was the most active congregation of the churches of Christ meeting north of Eight Mile Road," said Reaves. "We hit our peak attendance in the 1950s with about 600 people."

As newer suburbs developed, members moved north, starting churches of Christ in Royal Oak, Hazel Park, Troy and Beverly Hills.

The congregation sold the building on March 30 but continued to meet in rented facilities until their final service on Oct. 29.

They met once last time in December to decide what to do with their remaining assets: \$500,000. The members voted to give half of the money to Michigan Christian College, a private college loosely affiliated with 16 other fiercely independent colleges across the country. The remaining funds were donated to 13 church-related organizations.

College President Ken Johnson said: "This is the largest facilities gift in our history and brings us closer to our goal for a spring groundbreaking."

The college, with fewer than 500 students, offers two-year liberal arts degrees and several four-year diplomas in areas such as Bible studies, Christian ministry and counseling.