

# Church of Christ

Led by a man, Gerald E. Montgomery, whose faith in the Bible is so unquestioning that he states, "If the Bible said, Jonah swallowed the whale, I'd believe it," Southfield Church of Christ is a church membership whose sole guiding line is the Bible.

Mr. Montgomery's church is one that by the city's rapid changing growth-standards is a patriarch among the community churches.

Recognizing the potential of population, members moved to Southfield in October, 1956 and held their first meeting in the old Brooks school, Lahser and 11 Mile road.

The new edifice is located at 22355 11 Mile. Speaker at the first service in Brooks school was Mr. Montgomery.

The first minister was Mr. Montgomery's son-in-law, William Burke.

A veteran of, as he puts it, "Full-time preaching for 25 years; preaching for 30 years," Mr. Montgomery is so conversant with the Bible his conversation is rich with Biblical quotes.

Main tenet of his faith is "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent."

In defining beliefs of his church, Mr. Montgomery says, "We have no man made doctrines, no catechisms, no creeds."

"The whole rule of our faith and practice is the new Testament."

Each Church of Christ is completely autonomous. Churches may band together in fellowships to support work of the churches' 250 American missionaries in 80 countries or the 80 church-supported colleges or national radio and television programs.

Southfield Church of Christ sends contributions to the "Herald of Truth," national radio and television program; the Church of Christ Home for the Aged, Romeo, Michigan; the Shults - Lewis Orphan home, Valparaiso, Indiana; and the Michigan Christian Junior college, Rochester, Michigan.

Mr. Montgomery is one of the founders of the college and a member of its board of directors.

Board meetings are just one of the many things he has found time for in his life. He was a member of the Detroit Fire Department for 26 years, the last 10 as director of Public Relations.

At present he combines ministerial duties (sick calls, funerals, weddings, baptisms, Bible classes, preaching) in a 16-hour day that includes a job as executive director of the Greater Detroit Safety council.

A graduate of Freed - Hardeman college, Henderson, Tennessee, and David Lipscomb college, Nashville, he was born in McDonough county, Illinois.

He met Mrs. Montgomery at Freed - Hardeman and they now live at 19592 Nadol.

He has two daughters, Mrs. Robert Williams and Mrs. William Burke; two sons, Leonard and Gerald, Jr.; and nine grandchildren.

The new Southfield Church of Christ, financed by an \$85,000 bond issue and the result of eight years of effort, is the first in a five year plan. Buildings and land will eventually cost \$300,000.

Beyond actual construction of the new church, members did all the finishing of the church's interior, even down to laying tile.

It's Mr. Montgomery's dream to be able to accommodate 1,000 future members.

Present membership is 100 and they attend worship services in a setting stark in simplicity.

There is no cross-adorned altar, no piano, no organ. The church does not believe in instrumental music.

"If God had wanted music, we would've had it. We make music in our hearts," says Mr. Montgomery.

There is congregational singing.

The sanctuary has a high domed ceiling of light wood accented with arches of darker wood. The congregation sits in vivid orange chairs which Mr. Montgomery had his doubts about at first, but now takes pleasure in.

Baptism is a requisite for church membership and the church contains a baptismal font.

Strict adherence to congregational autonomy does away with general policy in Churches of Christ on matters of ecumenism and integration, but Mr. Montgomery is a strong advocate of both.

He notes, "You can't legislate brotherly love," but believes all men are one in Christ.

He feels, "A great amount of good can come from the ecumenical movement and we are coming back to the Bible."

He believes, however, this kind of movement can never succeed unless it is based on the Bible.



THE MEN who guide members of the Southfield Church of Christ paused after services recently. From left are Claude E. French, church elder; J. Earl Rush, elder; Gerald E. Montgomery, minister; and Chester E. Herndon, elder. The church now occupies a new edifice on 11 Mile road, just west of Lahser.



Dubious about present national wealth, he maintains, "The biggest thing wrong with our spiritual life today is the prosperity of the nation."

He brings much experience and a great capacity for work to his pulpit. He has served Northwest Church of Christ and the Hayes Avenue, Eastown and West Side Central Churches of Christ.

Aiding Mr. Montgomery in guiding his church members are three elders -- Claude E. French, Chester Herndon and J. Earl Rush.

There are five deacons -- Edward Curnutte, Robert Howard, Norval Scott, Ralph Stokes and James Williams.

Sunday school for all ages is held at 9:55 a.m. and worship and preaching services are at 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Sundays.

Bible study and prayer meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays.