

HISTORY OF SOUTH HAVEN  
church of Christ

The church of Christ in South Haven had its beginnings in 1964 when a small group of five families began to meet in the basement of Charles Newell's house in Coloma, Michigan. In the spring of 1964, the church had grown large enough to move to South Haven where  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land were purchased. This small, struggling congregation met in an old abandoned farm house before finally moving into a new building.

In 1965, a bond issue for \$50,000 was floated to construct this building, \$15,000 of which was quickly placed among the brethren. The contractor was to take \$35,000 to be placed in the hands of investors, However, he invested them in a fictitious company, which led to the loss of \$35,000 worth of bonds. Area congregations soon rallied together and finished construction of the building, allowing the congregation to begin meeting in its new structure before the winter of 1966. The church had now grown from five families to 125 in attendance. Unfortunately, after moving into the new building, attendance began to drop and, except for brief periods of growth, fell to a low of 55 in 1975.

During this period of time, several full-time preachers were hired, but no one remained long enough to develop a strong, thriving work. Steve Shannon and Jerry Selvidge who were local school teachers, began preaching on a part-time basis in 1972 and 1973. During this time, elders were chosen, and the church, for the first time, was scripturally organized.

The church experienced several spirts of growth, none of which led to any sustained growth. Many souls were baptized, but they seemingly went out the back door as fast as they were brought in the front door!

In the summer of 1975, Wayne Monroe held a meeting in South Haven and encouraged the brethren to dream big and plan for a goal of "501" in five years. He further persuaded the leaders to begin "bussing". With a new dream, and much excitement, the church sent Steve and Judy Shannon to Florence, Alabama to a bus-workers convention to learn "how to do it". In August, the church purchased three buses. In September it ran its first bus. By September of the following year, it had reached a high day of 770. When the first bus began to run, the church was averaging less than 60 in attendance. Today the average is around 400.

In February of 1976, the church hired Jerry Selvidge as a full-time worker. In August of 1976, they added a secretary and in September, a second full-time man, who was dropped in January of 1977. In June of 1977, the church hired Steve Shannon as a full-time bus and youth director, and has shown strong growth since that time.

This congregation has always had a strong evangelistic thrust. However, we have not known how to get the job done. When bussing became available, the church baptized 197 in 1976 and is expecting to baptize 250 in 1977. We keep approximately 75% of those baptized.

The church has two elders: Cecil Selvidge and Charles Newell. Both of these men were instrumental in starting the work in South Haven.

Three deacons presently are servants here: Steve Shannon, Arthur Egler, and Jerry Selvidge. Steve is the full-time bus/youth director, Jerry is the evangelist and Arthur captains bus #9. We also have one secretary, JoAnn Selvidge.