

THE HISTORY

50 YEARS OF SERVICE IN THE FLINT COMMUNITY
1928 - 1978



BRISTOL ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST
1315 W. BRISTOL ROAD
FLINT, MICHIGAN

In the early 19th century what came to be known as the "Restoration Movement" was sweeping America. It was an appeal to go back to the Bible in religion. A sincere effort to restore New Testament Christianity to the present day.

Two principle leaders in the Restoration Movement were Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell. Stone's influence radiated from Kentucky throughout the great Mississippi Valley and Campbell's influence spread from Virginia throughout the great Ohio Valley.

People who had come under Stone's influence first brought the Gospel to western Michigan, prior to Statehood. Not long after the planting of the Gospel in the

western side of the state Campbell's influence was felt in the eastern side of the state.

In 1840, Thomas Hawley, converted to New Testament Christianity by Alexander Campbell, moved to Detroit. The six Christians in his home began church services in their home the next year. Soon six members of the Linn family from Scotland were added. This little band of disciples continued to meet in private homes for a year. One of the number, Alexander Linn, began to preach boldly the word of God. Linn had a great influence in establishing the work of the Lord in Detroit. The church increased in numbers and was greatly multiplied.

In 1915 there was only one known member of the church in Flint, Mrs. Charles Carpenter who had moved from Harbor Beach. When another member, the daughter of J. N. Heironymus of Fairbury, Illinois, moved to a nearby farm, Claude F. Witty was called from Detroit to help establish the work of the Lord in Flint.

On July 22, 1915, the first meeting of the church was held in the Carpenter home with two members present. A year later there were twelve, and the Murray Hill church was started. Several congregations have come from this beginning.

In October of 1928, a small group of brethren living in the extreme southern part of Flint, just south of the Fisher Body plant, began meeting in their homes for worship. They were somewhat isolated from other congregations of the city, and as this section was rapidly being built up, it was thought the area would be a good location for a congregation. The group consisted of James A. Jackson, Claude E. Parish and W. T. Parish and their families — seven members altogether, and all members of the Murray Hill congregation.

The groups first meeting was held at James Jackson's house at 730 Norton Street.

Leonard Rucker of Detroit became interested in this new work and preached for them for about ~~two~~ years.

In July of 1930, a vacant store front at 5210 South Saginaw Street was rented and an evangelistic meeting of two weeks duration was conducted. C. B. Clifton, of Akron, did the preaching. The main objective of the meeting was to get the interest and active cooperation of other members known to be living in the community. At the close of this meeting the congregation was composed of fifteen members.

Soon after the 1930 meeting by Clifton a lot was purchased at 1477 E. Bristol Road and a small building was erected. L. V.

McGary of Detroit preached the first sermon in the new meeting house on March 22, 1931. Shortly after, J. H. Murrell and C. B. Clifton conducted a protracted meeting which brought the membership up to twenty-five.

In 1932, James A. Jackson, Elmer Nicholson and Oles Smith were selected as the first elders of the church.

In 1933, while the Great Depression was being felt throughout America, the little band of Christians meeting on East Bristol Road continued to surge ahead. Spiritual needs could not be neglected. The congregation meeting on Lewis Street merged with the Bristol Road group in the Spring of that year and the move proved fortunate and successful.

In 1935, a basement 36x50 was erected and the growing church met there. In 1935 a superstructure was completed with a seating capacity of 265.

The congregation enjoyed a rapid and phenomenal growth and the necessity for a larger auditorium became apparent. Many brethren had come from the South, where the church was stronger numerically, to work in the automobile factories of Flint. These converted others and the church would see a quarter of a century of even greater growth.

In 1952 an auditorium with a seating capacity of 544 was completed. A balcony was added in 1955. Several more classrooms and offices were added in 1958.

In 1965 the church saw the opportunity to start a new congregation in Swartz Creek.

Sixty-nine members and their families, including two elders and three deacons formed the nucleus of the Swartz Creek work beginning in February, 1965.

Today the church in Swartz Creek has a Sunday morning attendance exceeding five hundred.

Bristol Road has had a part in beginning four new congregations in the Flint area

(Fenton, Flushing, Swartz Creek and Nevada Avenue in Flint). The interest in mission work both in the Great lakes region and around the world has played a predominant role in the congregation's life and work.

In August of 1967 the Bristol Road family erected a commodious church home at 1315 W. Bristol Road. The facility has six offices, a library, thirty-two classrooms, a print shop, radio production room, an annex auditorium which will seat 450, an auditorium that will seat 1,300 and a balcony when completed that will seat another 550.

Today the church has a membership of 936 and comprises the largest church of Christ in the northern United States.

The congregation is an excellent example of church growth under capable elders.

Elmer Nicholson, Wendell Robb, Carl Kirkpatrick, Alexander Mills, John Cox, Porter Partridge and Emmett French serve as the church's seven elders.

Former elders having served the work faithfully were Delbert Gowin, Joseph Sandefer, Guy Lawrence, E. E. Wallace, Clarence Huskey, Oles Smith and James Jackson.

Preachers who have served the congregation full-time are: R. J. Reynolds, H. D. Jeffcoat, L. N. Moody, Jewell Norman, O. D. McKendree, G. L. Mann, Jack Gray, Eugene Pigg, Virgil Knox, Larry Acuff and Don House.

Other preachers serving the church in various capacities include: Gary Turner, Carl Bates, Irvin Bass, Nolan Crawford, Terry Blake, Marshall Henson, Mike Wilson and Charles Garner.

The Bristol Road church has hosted some of the largest evangelistic meetings held among churches of Christ in America during the last two decades. Such speakers as Jimmy Allen, Charles Coil and Mike Sinapiades have drawn large crowds and numerous responses.

In 1970 the church began a school of preaching under the leadership of Nolan Crawford and Terry Blake. This work is consistent with the church's missionary zeal.

In 1977 and 1978 the church hosted, under the leadership of Don House, what was termed the Great Lakes Evangelism Workshop. More than 2,000 people attended each of these workshops.

In 1978 a special ministry to the deaf was launched in response to a pressing need. This work is flourishing under the preaching of Charles Garner who also is deaf.

Never have the challenges of work been so great as they are today. Never has the need to restore New Testament Christianity been more pressing. The Restoration Movement in America and around the world is a continuing quest to go back to the Bible in all things that pertain to religion. Truth can be found only in the word of God. It is truth that sets men free (John 8:32).

The "churches of Christ salute you." Romans 16:16

SOURCES

1936 Directory, Murray Hill, South Saginaw Street and Bristol Road Churches of Christ.
Michigan Churches of Christ by Harold E. Hanley, 1962
1965, 1967, 1974 Directories of the Bristol Road church of Christ and individual members of the church.
The Restoration Movement in Michigan, Robert L. Gindwood, 1976.

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