

HISTORY OF TRINITY U C C

By Stanley Hufford

An article written by Rev. J. B. Rust in 1907 and published in the Christian World indicates that our local church has its roots in a Reformed Church located in McCutchenville and dating back to the eighteen forties.

In 1846 at a meeting of the Ohio Synod in Columbus the Rev. Daniel Koth reported four congregations as constituting his charge, Tiffin, McCutchenville and two others, with a total membership of three hundred twenty four persons. He resided in Tiffin. In 1847 Rev. W. H. Brinkerhoff, as the record shows, was pastor of the McCutchenville and Sycamore churches. In 1848 Rev. Brinkerhoff reported forty four total members and named McCutchenville as his place of residence. In 1850 Rev. H. K. Baines appeared as pastor of the McCutchenville charge, consisting of the Mt. Pisgah and McCutchenville congregations and possessing a total membership of one hundred twenty persons. At that time Rev. Baines lived in Tiffin. In 1851 Rev. Baines was preaching at Mt. Pisgah, at Swander's school house and at McCutchenville. The last congregation according to Synod records had been organized for a number of years and had at that time a membership of about thirty persons. In 1852 at the Ohio Synod meeting, the Rev. H. K. Baines appeared again as pastor of the McCutchenville charge and reported a membership of fifty eight persons. He resided in McCutchenville.

In 1853 the McCutchenville charge was reported vacant. It continued to be reported vacant until the year 1858 when it no longer appeared in the statistical tables.

The house of worship was built of logs and contained on its interior a large gallery, surrounding three sides of the building, a common plan in those times. It stood in the center of the old burying ground south east of the village, and was finally sold and taken down. It was owned and used jointly by the Lutheran and Reformed people of the community. The Lutheran and Reformed congregations worshipping there, ceased to exist almost simultaneously. Just previous to this time there were five different churches in the village of McCutchenville, The Albrights had a church, which also was sold when the congregation ceased to exist. The other two churches were the Roman Catholic and Methodist Episcopal.

In 1854 at about the time the Reformed and Lutheran interests ceased, and the field had to be abandoned by Tiffin Classis, the Presbyterian Church appeared upon the scene and organized a congregation.

Around the turn of the century the Presbyterian Church was served by a succession of three pastors who had been raised in the Reformed faith

and who had graduated from Heidelberg Theological Seminary in Tiffin. These three men were Rev. A. C. Shuman, Rev. Theodore J. Bacher and Rev. William G. Gerlach. After Rev. Gerlach left, the church was vacant for a period of time. During the vacancy a financial problem arose which caused a large number of the Presbyterian congregation to sever their connection with the church, and together with others from the surrounding area, they asked Tiffin Classis to grant them the privilege to organize a Reformed congregation and to build a Reformed Church in McCutchenville. At two special meetings of the Classis, in the presence of a large delegation of petitioners on each occasion, the situation and the appeal were carefully considered. It was discovered that a great many of the persons whose names appeared on the petition were of Reformed ancestry, and that some of them originally belonged to the Reformed Church at Berwick and to the Salem congregation in Seneca Township.

Finally on Wednesday, March 28, 1906 in Salem Church, Seneca Township, by a committee of Tiffin Classis, having plenary power, Trinity Reformed congregation of McCutchenville was organized. The committee consisted of Rev. D. Van Horne, Rev. J. B. Rust, and Elder N. L. Brewer. About one hundred persons entered into the new organization. It was a solemn moment when the right hand of fellowship was extended by the representatives of the Tiffin Classis to so large a number of earnest and devoted people.

Immediate steps were taken to erect a suitable house of worship. The cornerstone of the new church was laid on August 26, 1906. Dr. Van Horne and Rev. Shuman preached the sermons. During the time the church was being built, church services were held at intervals of four weeks in the Tymochtee school house, the Sunday School meeting every Sunday. The congregation was attached to the Bascom charge during this time, hence the pastor of that church conducted most of the services of worship throughout the year.

The first service of worship and the dedication services were held in the new edifice on May 19, 1907. The attendance was quiet large and many people came from a distance. Dr. Rust, Dr. Van Horne, Dr. C. E. Miller and Dr. H. J. Christman took part in the dedication services. Also taking part in the morning, afternoon and evening services were two choirs from the congregation. The adult choir of thirty one voices was accompanied by piano, organ, a clarinet, a cornet and a violin. Twenty two boys and girls made up the children's choir.

During Dr. Miller's address he challenged the congregation to liquidate the \$3500 which still needed to be paid on the building. The people responded liberally and by the close of the evening service only about \$700 was yet to be raised.

The first consistory of our church was composed of the pastor, Charles O. Weikert, George W. Lott, J. Frank Badger, Oscar Hahn and Edward Swerlein. Hiram Johnson, Frank Gier and William Parkins were also on the building committee. There were 112 charter members of the new McCutchenville Reformed Church.

Dr. Rust, serving not only our McCutchenville Church but other churches in the area as well, lived in Tiffin, Ohio, commuted here to serve the church faithfully from its organization until June 1, 1909. His successor, The Rev. Charles E. Ewing (1909-1912) was the pastor when on *March* 13, 1910, a Jubilee Service was held rejoicing the burning of all financial notes held against the new church building. The total cost of the building, Seven Thousand Seven Hundred Sixteen Dollars, had been paid with great sacrifice and hard work.

During the pastorate of The Rev. Earl E. Engle (1913-1916) many members were received from the Salem Reformed Church located northwest of the village. In 1915 a canvass for a new lighting plant was held and new lights were subsequently installed.

The congregation met and overcame many financial problems during the short pastorates of The Rev. L. B. Small (1917-1918) and the Rev. M. H. Schroer (1918-1919). A congregational meeting held on May 1, 1919 reported 128 members, 115 of whom communed during the previous year. Thus the growth of our church in its first 15 years was tedious and slow.

On February 20, 1920, the Rev. L. B. Small returned to be pastor both of our church and of the local Presbyterian Church. The records indicate that on May 9, 1921, a resolution was passed that "Whereas a goodly number from neighboring churches have been worshipping with us" this church should be known as the Federated Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. Later that year articles of agreement were proposed for a Federated Church in McCutchenville; however, this movement toward church union of the McCutchenville Churches was abandoned. Many new members were received as a result of this movement toward union.

During the early part of the pastorate of the Rev. Ray H. *Klingaman*, 1924-1927, a parsonage was purchased. This pastorate became a period of much frustration and considerable labor on the part of both pastor and congregation. Communion records for the year 1925 indicate the membership grew to approximately 200 members. Darker days lay immediately ahead, however; following this pastorate the church was without a pastor for an extended period and only through efforts of the stated supply, The Rev. Mr. Loucks, were worship opportunities continued.

The Rev. H. E. Settlage, 1930-1933, shepherded this flock through the trying early depression days. These were difficult days when financial matters were of predominate concern in the records of the church. Nevertheless, the work of the Lord was continued and the faith of our people was tempered. Upon Rev. Settlage's resignation in 1933, The Rev. H. H. Casselman became our supply pastor for nearly a year. The Rev. Paul Lammers was called to serve this church from 1934-1937, and during his pastorate the church sanctuary and Sunday School rooms were completely redecorated and beautified. Rev. Lammers was succeeded by Rev. H. N. Dorres 1937-1938, who served until The Rev. A. S. Peeler came to our church in 1938. He led the congregation until his sudden and unexpected death on January 21, 1942. The Rev. Silas Royer became the stated supply and served the congregation in 1942.

In August, 1942, The Rev. William F. Kissel began the longest pastorate in the 50-year history of the church. During his nine-year pastorate, the McCutchenville Church observed its 40th anniversary by appropriately dedicating the new altar and chancel furniture thus making our church an altar-centered church. The basement of the church was made more adequate for religious education purposes and Rev. Kissel's service through the dark days of World War II was a comfort and inspiration to this congregation.

Early in the year 1952, a movement was agitated to build a new parsonage on a lot recently donated to the church adjacent to the church building. On March 16, 1952, the congregation voted to sell the old parsonage located next to the present McCutchenville Public School Building and to proceed with a financial campaign to finance the remainder of the cost of a new parsonage. A new parsonage was completed and dedicated in September of that year. The parsonage and garage were built at a total cost of \$13,500.00.

On July 1, 1952, The Rev. Paul E. Deppen was called to become pastor of this church. During his pastorate it became apparent that church growth necessitated more room, particularly for religious education needs. Records showed that church school attendance increased from an average of 116 in 1951 to 156 in 1954 and that church membership had grown from 223 in 1952 to 253 in 1954.

In 1956 a \$17,000 remodeling project was begun which made major changes in the church sanctuary and a complete renovation of the church basement. Included in the plan were seven new classrooms for the religious education needs, a new gas furnace, a new kitchen, and dining room facilities, a leveling of the sanctuary floor and more adequate lighting facilities through the church.

Trinity E & R Church observed the 50th anniversary of the congregation with special services beginning with a fellowship banquet at 7 p.m.

Friday, May 17, 1957 and concluding with rededication of the remodeled church at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday. Nineteen charter members were honored at the banquet. The sermon on Sunday morning was delivered by a former pastor The Rev. Ray H. Klingaman and the dedication sermon in the afternoon was given by the Rev. Philip Shober, a former son of the congregation.

Rev. Deppen submitted his resignation in 1957 but the many challenges which he made to the congregation were continued by his successor, The Rev. Eugene E. Hegemier, 1958-1965. During his pastorate the average church attendance and Sunday school attendance reached an all-time high of 188 and 193 respectively. The congregation continued its fund-raising activities and on September 24, 1961 the corner stone of a new education unit was laid. The building was completed and dedicated on January 24, 1962. Rev. Deppen came back to give the dedication sermon. The \$58,000 project provided a new fellowship hall, seven classrooms, a pastor's study, a work room and storage space.

Rev. Don Nichols served as pastor of our church from 1965 to 1967, Rev. James W. Garner from 1968 to 1972, and Rev. Louis Dorsch from 1973 to 1979. Our present minister is The Rev. Jon R. Coddington who was installed on September 14, 1980.

In 1968 the steeple on the church was removed and the new interior of the sanctuary was redecorated, including a new lowered ceiling. New choir pews were installed in 1971 and a sound system was installed in the sanctuary and fellowship hall in 1974.

On this our seventy-fifth anniversary as we look back over our history we find one of the most outstanding contributions made to Christendom by this Church has been the sending forth of our youth into full-time Christian service. They include The Rev. Lewis Fritz, The Rev. Stanley Fritz, Mrs. Ruth Weikert Bishop, Mrs. Joanne Shober Desmond, The Rev. Philip Shober, The Rev. Neil Gilliland and The Rev. Mark Bishop. The service of our church as been extended to many communities through the efforts of these servants of God of whom we are justly proud.

Source: Stanley Hufford
Researched for 75th Anniversary

Italicized = corrections made to original document.