

# **First Christian Church Disciples of Christ**

**FREMONT, MICHIGAN**



**1880-1980  
CENTENNIAL**





*An early picture of the church from a drawing by Henry Kurrle.*

A Centennial history of the First Christian Church Disciples of Christ, Fremont, Michigan, as compiled and written by Carmen Carter and combined with an earlier history written by Randy Puff.

We wish to thank Ida Evans, Evelyn Wilkinson, Dale Collins, Aletha Weaver, and others for furnishing pictures and material.

## FOREWORD

As you read this history let your imagination fill in between the lines. Let the names and events take on new life. Try in your mind to get acquainted with the persons who have worshiped the Lord and served in His name in our congregation throughout the years.

May this history and our imagination inspire us to new endeavors of service, and enhance our sense of Gods presence with us as we begin this new century.

I find this history delightful to read. It is detailed enough to give essential facts, and is not laboriously lengthy and is very interestingly written. Thanks to Carmen Carter and those who have worked with her in preparing this history.

Your Pastor



*Pastor and Mrs. Robert Dally*



**FREMONT FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST  
CENTENNIAL 1880-1980**

*"This is the day which the Lord hath made; We will rejoice and be glad in it."* Ps. 118:24

We are rejoicing today in the one hundredth birthday of our church, First Christian Church Disciples of Christ, which has stood at the corner of Elm and Division in Fremont for one hundred years.

Membership actually dates back to 1870 when Cyrus Alton, an evangelist from Indiana, held meetings at Root-town, three miles east of Fremont. Between twenty and thirty converts were received into the denomination.

The following year he and some of the members left for Nebraska. The few that were left were not enough to carry on here so they joined other churches with the understanding that they would withdraw if ever a local Church of Christ was founded here.

There was no further effort until 1879 when Elias Sias held meetings in Bailey. Learning that there were people in Fremont Center (as it was called then) who were interested in that denomination, he came here, and, with their consent, held meetings in an abandoned store building.

In 1880 Reverend Sias went to Ephriam Misner and his son Will, and asked them if they would build a church. They readily agreed. At that time the population of Fremont Center was between eight and nine hundred people.

The property where the church stands was purchased from James R. O'Dell for one hundred dollars. It was worth more but Mr. O'Dell donated the rest.

J.B. Jewell, who operated a saw mill on the north side of the village, then told the members that they could obtain the lumber for the building from his own fine hemlock woods, near the mill, if they would just pay the cost of cutting and hauling the trees to the mill and sawing them into lumber. This was done. Shingles for the roof were from the Gibson Shingle Mill in Fremont.

It is noted in an early history of Newaygo County that, "in 1880 the Church of Christ built an edifice costing about two thousand dollars".

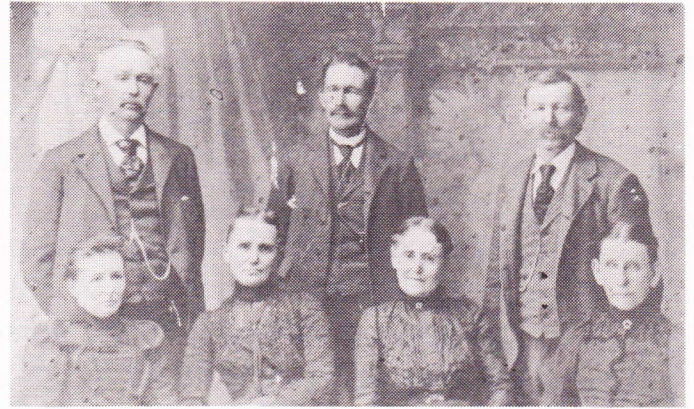
Probably the youngest worker was Duane Darling, who helped to dig the basement at the age of 15.

The church then had a charter membership of twenty one. They were:

Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Alton  
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Darling  
Mr. and Mrs. John Kimball  
Mr. and Mrs. Ephriam Misner  
Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Reynolds  
Mr. and Mrs. Jarman Cole  
Mr. and Mrs. Sam Coburn  
Mrs. Van Davis  
Mrs. E. Darwin  
Mrs. Alice Peck  
Mrs. Homer Nichols  
Mrs. M. Spooner  
Mr. and Mrs. Dan Faunce

The first elders were: A. M. Alton and Ephriam Misner. Deacons were: Jarman Cole, Henry Darling, and Clark Reynolds. The first Sunday School Superintendent was A. M. Alton.

Attendance was about 75 each Sunday. Two services were



*Some charter members. Center top A. M. Alton and 3rd from left bottom row is Mrs. Alton.*

held each Sunday and one during the week.

The first service held in the church was the funeral of Benjie Alton, aged 3, son of A. M. Alton. He died of Scarlet Fever. He was buried on Thanksgiving Day. The men of the church worked all night putting down flooring so the funeral could be held there.

A small testament belonging to Anna Alton was placed in the cornerstone along with some other items.

The pulpit was directly over the baptistry which was under the rostrum. The underside of the trap door over the baptistry was covered with a white cloth on which was written an appropriate Bible verse.

There were steps along the side of the rostrum.

The choir sat facing the congregation, to the right of the minister and at floor level.

The communion table sat on the main floor of the pulpit. The communion service consisted of a carafe, goblets and white china plates. The bread was baked by Mrs. Duane Darling and the grape juice was canned by the Ladies Aid Society.



*Sunday School class 1910. Front: Merle Thibos, Louise Anderson, Anna Wilkinson Boeskol, Charles Wilkinson, Carroll Thibos. Back: Nellie Upton Schrowder, Ida Miller Evans, Elsie Mc Clary Fulker-son, Hazel James, Edna Coil Doyle.*

A door at the left of the pulpit led to the horse sheds and the rest rooms were located at either end of the shed.

There were long benches along each side of the sanctuary, along the back, and pews in the center.

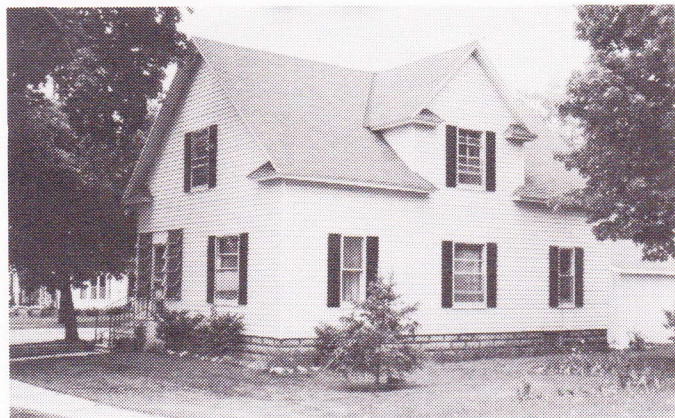
The church was heated by two pot-bellied stoves located in the northwest and southwest corners.

Evening services were lighted by four wagon-wheel style chandeliers containing six kerosene lamps each. There were lamps behind the pulpit, also.

The back part of the church was built in 1905. It was used



as a class room for the younger children on Sundays and for Wednesday evening prayer meetings. Ida Evans remembers going to Sunday School there and later on she was a teacher there



*Parsonage*

The parsonage was built about 1906 by a carpenter named Lina Taylor. The money to build it was earned by the Ladies Aid Society. They sold dinners for 25 cents each at the "old soldiers and sailors encampments" at Fremont Lake. The meals were served in the old pavillion which stood next to the creek, with a porch extending over the inlet to the lake. The bait shop is located there now.

The first minister to live in the parsonage was T. W. Bellingham.

Early in the 1900's the second pulpit was presented to the church by William Clark. The old one was given to the Burt Lake Church.

The first basement was a project of the 20th Century Class and was completed in 1911. While it was being constructed services were held in the Grand Army of the Republic Building on North Division Street.



*G A R reunion encampment at Fremont Lake in 1900.*

The first furnace was a single register one in the partial basement. In 1924 the rest of the basement and the steam heating unit were put in.

In the early 1930's Mr. and Mrs. Frank Newlin presented the church with new lighting fixtures. The stained glass windows were purchased in 1943.

In 1944 Mr. and Mrs. Elta J. Martin had the carillons installed in memory of her parents, the A. M. Altons. They also set up a trust fund for the maintenance of the carillons as well as maintenance of the Adelia Alton Social Center. The Center was purchased from the estate of Frank Sherwood in 1948. A donation from Elta Martin in memory of



*Elta J. Martin at the dedication of the Adelia Alton Social Center in 1949.*

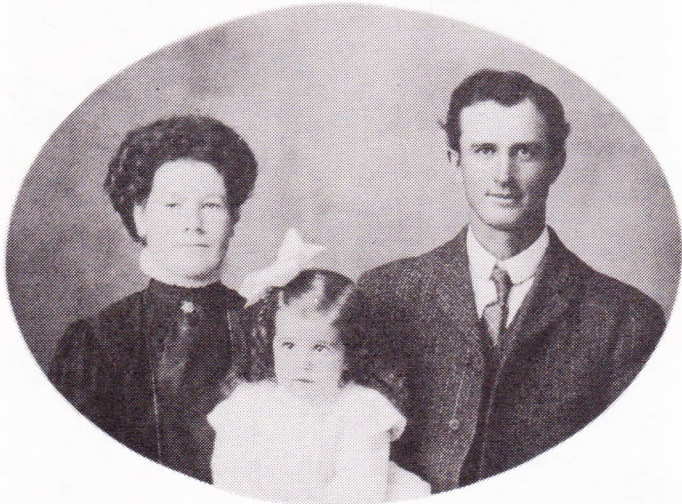
his wife's mother, Adelia Alton, was enough to pay for the property and to pay \$1,000 toward the remodeling. Mrs. Alton had been the first president of the Ladies Aid Society. The center was dedicated on April 18th, 1949. It has been used by all organizations of the church. In 1953 the Ladies Aid Society had a new oil furnace installed so the building could be used year round.



*Adelia Alton Social Center*



In 1948 the name of the church was changed from Church of Christ to First Christian Church of Fremont (Disciple of Christ). This was to avoid confusion with several other denominations calling themselves Churches of Christ. Some are known by different names such as Christian Church, First Christian Church, Church of Christ, Campbellites (for the founder Thomas Campbell). The denomination is the largest protestant organization to originate on this continent. It began with Thomas Campbell's Declaration and address in 1809 and was organized into a brotherhood in 1820.



*Dan and Mabel Fitzimmons and Mary Emma*

In 1951 Elta J. Martin purchased 30 feet of property just south of the church and deeded it to the church to take care of any future expansion. This is known as the Gertrude Martin Addition.

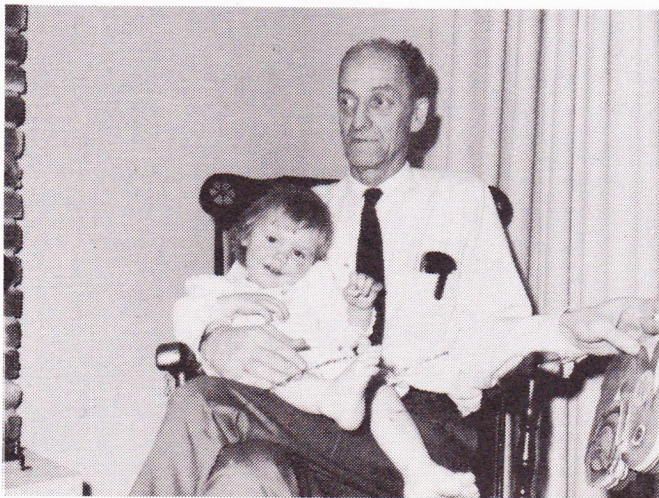
In 1953 Duane Darling presented the church with a moving picture projector which has been of great value in entertainment and educational work.

The Fidelis Society financed the new cupboards for the kitchen in 1954.

In 1948 the reed organ given the church by Duane Darling was sold. The proceeds of the sale were applied to the purchase of a new Hammond organ. It was dedicated in September of that year.

The pulpit Bible was presented in 1956 as a memorial to Neil Waters.

A new communion service was given by the family and



*Walter Reineke*

The communion table was given by Mrs. Jess Davis and family as a memorial to Mr. Davis.



*Jesse Davis*

The communion cross and candle holders were given by Mrs. T. I. Fry in 1940, in memory of her mother and her sister, Mrs. Alice O'Dell and Mrs. Evelyn Willson.

New hymnals were given by the Robert Lindsey family in



*Leslie Lewis*



1967 in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Lewis.

The flower stands were given by Mrs. Edna Krapp in memory of Joseph Krapp.

In 1964 a new brick education building was constructed on the property between the church and Social Center. It contains the pastor's study, a nursery, and class rooms.

In November 1967 we rededicated our newly remodeled sanctuary. Ray Jansma was the designer and James V. Johnson the chairman of the remodeling committee. The work began in August and was completed in October.



*Education Building*

Included in the remodeling was the relocation of a new baptismal pool behind the dorsal curtain at the center of the chancel. The chancel was redesigned to include a new pulpit built into the chancel railing. Other work included installation of new brass tone light fixtures, repainted walls, and early American style carpeting. The foyer was also

remodeled. A new coat area and a combination guest register and memorial bookcase were added.

The cost of remodeling was about \$10,000, much of which was covered by funds left to the church by Neil Waters. Mr. Waters was an active member of the church, especially in music, until his death.

The women of the church purchased new pews in March, 1968.



*Ground breaking for the new education building in 1964. Don Potter with shovel with Aletha Weaver, Ervin Knox, Wm. Bryant and Rev. Ronald Byars looking on.*



*20th Century Class in 1911*

*Bottom row l to r: Mrs. Thibos, Rev. Thibos, Duane Darling, Frank Newlin, Hanna Bierce, Brett Bacon and Anna Upton.*





*Mr. and Mrs. Dick Somers and Lucille*

Late in 1968 committees from our church and the Congregational Church began a joint study of the feasibility of forming a new United Christian Church, by uniting the two congregations. After two years of study the plan was submitted and recommended by both committees. On November 10, 1970 it was approved by the elected officials of our church. There were 28 people at this meeting and 22 were in favor of submitting the proposal to the congregation for a vote. On December 6, 1970 our congregation turned it down by 6 votes.



*The Upton Family*

Some recent improvements to our church have been to panel the basement, making it more attractive for serving dinners, wedding receptions, and other social activities.

The carillons that Elta Martin had installed as a memorial gift could no longer be repaired, but we felt an obligation to continue this memorial so a new Hammond organ was purchased. It has chimes and a sound system. The sound has been connected to speakers in the steeple with an amplifier at the pulpit in the same manner as the original installation.

The church has had new aluminum siding, new roof, storm windows, insulation and a new steeple.

The parsonage has new aluminum siding, new roof, hot water heating system, double garage and utility room.

A combination heating and cooling unit was installed in the pastor's study to avoid heating the whole building when only the study is being used.

"The Disciple", a newsletter, began in 1962, is sent out to about 280 homes each month.

We have a membership of 260 but only about half of them are active in the church today. The average attendance is 85 each Sunday.

We have a 12 member choir and Barbara Dally is our choir director and pianist. Nancy Wilkinson is our church organist.

We hold rummage and bake sales twice each year and a bazaar each fall.

Organizations that are active at this time are, Christian Womens Fellowship, Ladies Aid Society, Mens Fellowship, Y.A.F. (Young Adult Fellowship), M.A.G. (Middle, Adult



*The Gilbert Barnhard Family*





At convention of old 4th district held at Bailey in 1910. The two adults in front are Duane and Anna Darling

Group), and Chi Rho, a youth group.

Like all churches we have had our good times and bad, but the good far out number the bad and as we pause to celebrate one hundred years of leading, learning, and loving here at First Christian, we are looking forward to, with the grace of God, many more years ahead.

"With Him the glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." Eph. 3:21

### Ministers Who Have Served Our Church

Cyrus Alton	1870
Elias Sias	1879-1881
J. A. Grice	1881-1883
William Wheeler	1883-1885
C. W. Gardner	1885-1889
S. B. Culp	1889-1891
D. A. Shaw	1891-1895
Elias Sias	1895-1897
B. D. Bright	1897-1898
J. B. Holley	1898-1899
F. T. Porter	1899-1904
G. G. Horn	1904-1906
T. W. Bellingham	1906-1908
A. R. Adams	1908-1909
J. C. Walton	1909-1910
R. A. Thibos	1910-1918
D. P. Morris	1918-1920
M. A. Liddle	1920-1923
J. N. Booth	1923-1925
Mark Wall	1925-1927
E. E. Pickett	1927-1939



Ladies Aid Society 1949

Top row l to r: Phyllis Shaw, Esther Bacon, Eloise Brink, Edrie O'Neal, Inez Barnhard, Helen Miller, Gladys Coburn, Grace Beem and Norma Wackerow. Bottom row: Ida Doud, Anna Boeskool, Aletha Weaver, Alice Davis, Nettie King, Hattie Bacon, Grace Miller and Persis Brink.



H. Corson O'Brian	1939-1942
W. M. Rogers	1942-1946
Robert Burns	1946-1947
W. J. Keener	1948-1957
Wayne Kinion	1957-1961
Ron Byars	1962-1966
Neil Topliff	1966-1968
La Ray Salsberry	1968-1972
Robert Gay	1972-1976
Robert Dally	1977-Present

### GLEANINGS

In 1915 the total membership of the church was 93.

In 1917 Duane Wilkinson, at the age of 17, became the church pianist and was paid 50¢ per week. Two years later it was voted to raise this to 75¢ but he had to furnish his own music.

In 1930 a piano was presented to the church by sister Persis Brink in memory of her husband, Asa C. Brink. They were the grandparents of Donald Brink.

In a letter written by former pastor Jay Booth to Dale Collins in 1963, he recalls that he came to Fremont in June, 1923. The church had offered him \$125.00 per month plus room and board which cost \$6.00 per week. The next year

they gave him a \$300.00 a year raise, but one lady objected, asking "What can a young man who is not married do with so much money?"

Reverend Booth remembers conducting a funeral for Norman Lock. It was at night and the Ku Klux Klan attended in white robes and a cross was burned on the lawn.

Mr. Lock was the grandfather of Claude Hendrie, who has been an active member of the church since 1928.

Reverend Booth also recalls that in January of 1925 a boy came and wanted to be baptised in his best wool suit and with his shoes on. That boy was Dale Collins, and he remembers walking about a mile home in the freezing temperature afterward. He said that "it did not even take the crease out of his trousers".

In 1941, there was something call "the project" in the minutes. For a long time it was a mystery until it finally came out that the women of the church needed a new bathroom. It was not thought proper to say "bathroom" in mixed company so it was referred to simply as "the project".

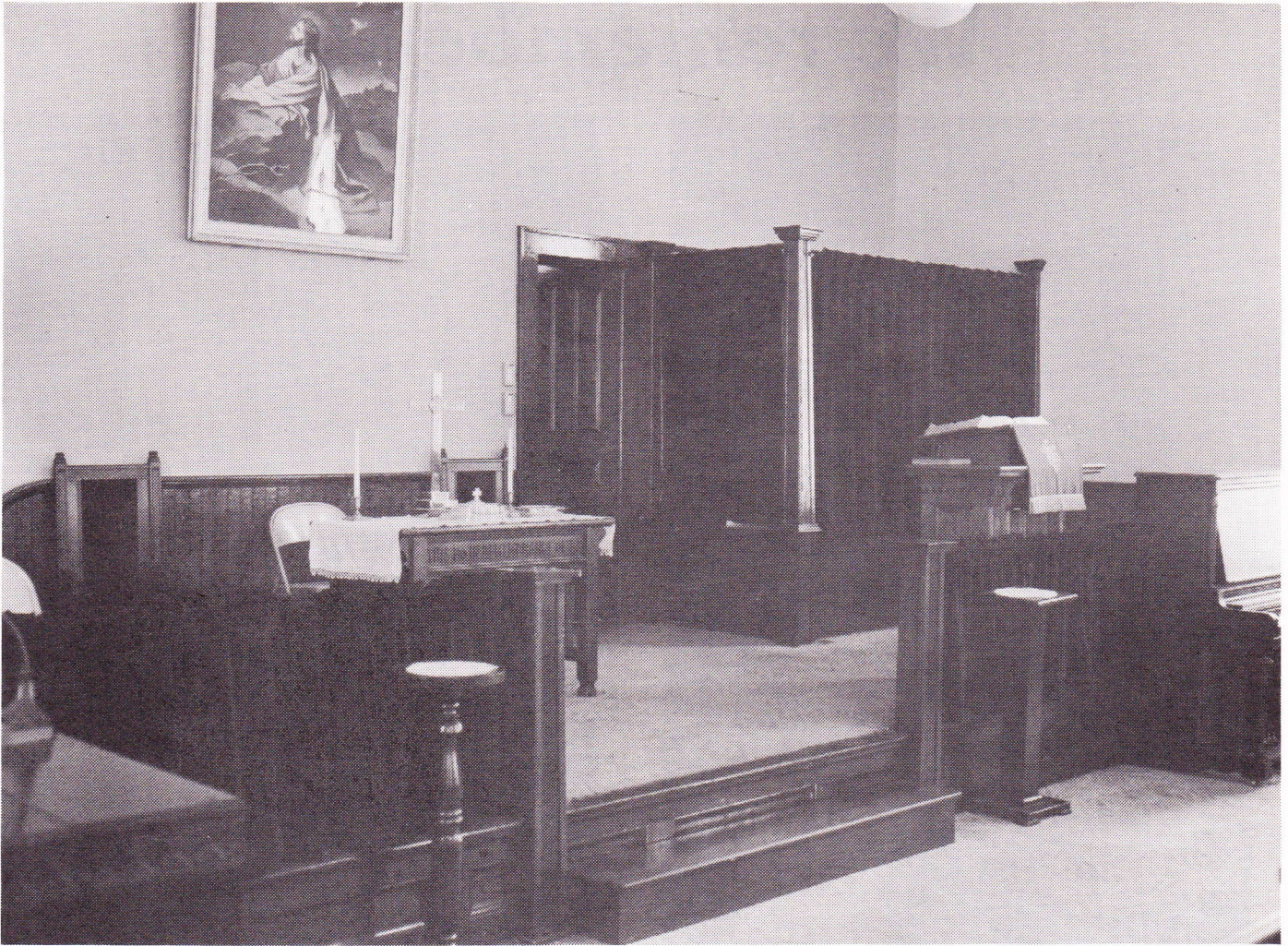
Some interim ministers we remember are:

- Reverend Waldo
- Reverend Matt Mullin
- Reverend Mac Farland
- Reverend Hosier
- S. V. Matson



*Helen Beem Miller with some of her paintings*





*The sanctuary before remodeling. The picture is a charcoal drawing by Mrs. F. T. Porter presented to the church as a farewell gift in 1904.*

Harold Sweeny

The following members are all over the age of 75:

Frances Buckner  
 Gladys Coburn  
 Ida Mae Collins  
 Ruby Davison  
 Ida Evans  
 Lois Gates  
 Russel Graff  
 Hazel Jackson  
 Ruth Link  
 Hazel Miller  
 Ester Pettyjohn  
 Lena Pickle  
 Gertrude Wantz  
 Creta Wyble

The Friendly Bible Class had their own song:

The Friendly Bible Class is marching  
 To conquer ones unlearned  
 The Bible does our teaching  
 To those who want to learn  
 Christ's love and full forgiveness  
 This class will all acclaim  
 That this our motto "obedience"  
 Is worthy of its name.



*Sanctuary after renovation*



# *We remember....*



*Duane and Anna Darling*



*Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Amos*



*Mrs. Henry Darling - Charter member*



*Mrs. Sarah Miner*





*Addie Simpson*



*Mrs. J. R. O'Dell*  
*(Great grandmother of Evelyn Mc Cormick)*



*Lydia Mc Kee - Charter member*



*Mrs. Grace Miller*





*Pat McGowen*



*Lena Mankin*

