

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

A History of the Erlanger
(Kentucky) Church of
Christ

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Connor Yeager moved to Erlanger from Covington around 1897. Mr. Yeager was a member of the Church of Christ and around 1899 he started a Sunday School. Forty to fifty people were placed on the rolls under the leadership of Mr. Yeager and a meeting place was secured on the second floor of the three story Town Hall building. This building was also known as the Opera House.

In the winter of 1900, J. W. McGarvey, president of the College of the Bible in Lexington, sent a student, Edgar DeWitt Jones, to preach part time at the church in Bullittsville located in Boone County. He took up residence in Erlanger and was soon asked to preach for a new work in Erlanger. The church records show the congregation officially began in 1901 with thirty-four charter members.

During the first part of the twentieth century, the churches from the Restoration movement suffered two splits. One branch is known today as the Disciples of Christ and the other as independent Churches of Christ/Christian Churches. For forty years, the Erlanger church wavered, as many local congregations did in that day, between the two. Mr. Jones was a strong leader in the Disciples of Christ branch of our churches and S.S. Lappin, who

ministered here from 1908-12, was the editor for the Christian Standard.

In 1941, Harold Hossom, a recent graduate of the Cincinnati Bible Seminary, came to Erlanger as the minister.

Many changes took place during Harold Hossom's five year ministry with the Erlanger Christian Church. Church and Sunday School attendance almost doubled and a large group of young people was developed.

The first Vacation Bible School was held in 1942, the classrooms were remodeled and the basement decorated to accommodate the increase. A weekday community-wide Kindergarten began at the church and by 1945, Lida Martin was employed as the church secretary and Jessica Floyd, a student at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary was hired as a "pastoral assistant" and her job included teaching in the kindergarten run by Erlanger Christian and working with the young people at the church.

Around this time some of the members realized that Erlanger Christian Church had left the Disciples movement. The name of the church had been changed to the Church of Christ, the Women's Missionary society had been abolished and the church no longer supported the United Christian Missionary Society.

The leadership decided to stop the changes and went back to traditional Disciples' practice and teaching materials. According

to the verbal history of the remaining charter members of the Erlanger Church of Christ, when Mr. Hossom resigned the young people wanted another preacher from the Cincinnati Bible Seminary but the elders chose a man from Transylvania University.

Apparently, Harold Hossom's resignation in 1946 was forced and his resignation was shortly followed by the removal of the pastoral assistant.

On Thursday evening, December 19, 1946 a group of thirty-six met in the Junior Order Hall (the old Opera House where the Erlanger Christian Church had begun) to discuss finding a place to worship and decide if they should start a new church. There was a little uncertainty about making this break but after much prayer, the decision was made to hold worship services.

The first service was held on Sunday, December 22, 1946 in the same hall the Erlanger Christian Church had met in some 45 years before. Tony Connely spoke to 48 people in the morning worship. Forty-three were present for Sunday School and forty-one returned for the evening worship.

For three months the little group of Christians met and listened to various speakers from the Cincinnati Bible Seminary. On Sunday evening, March 2, 1947, Edsel Dale, from the seminary, spoke about the advisability of starting a church. Gracie Cleek, reflecting in her unpublished work "The Erlanger Church of Christ

in Review 1946-1971" wrote, "After much prayer and discussion we decided to go on and start a New Testament Church."

For the next four months they met every Sunday morning, and Wednesday night too, without a minister. On July 20, 1947 Grayson Ensign, a professor at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary began a part time ministry with the church.

The first church picnic was held September 1, 1947 on the old fairgrounds where the current church building stands and By-Laws were adopted on October 26, 1947.

Olin Hay spoke at the first youth rally sponsored by the new church on March 19, 1948 at Lloyd High School. About one quarter of the congregation at this time consisted of teenagers and as Gracie Cleek wrote, they "left a lasting impression on the congregation as teachers, leaders and examples of Christian living. Three of the boys studied for the ministry and five of the girls married ministers."

On June 7, 1948 the church bought a 12 room house on Commonwealth Ave. (now the youth annex of the Erlanger Baptist church) to covert into a place of worship.

George Mark Elliott preached at the first service in the new building on August 8, 1948 with 56 people present. The building was dedicated on November 21, 1948.

In 1949, the young people surveyed over 200 homes in

Erlanger. Also in 1949, Rolland Steever held a revival meeting, the Women's Council was formed, the first graduate banquet and VBS were held and a Scriptural Symposium was conducted in the fall.

By 1951, the teenagers were getting older and a "Young Married People's Class" began. A fifty foot lot behind the church building was purchased and Mr. Ensign resigned in April. Mark Elliott began his ministry on May 20. The church had almost doubled in size in the first five years of its existence.

Mark Elliott only stayed as minister at the Erlanger Church of Christ for seven months. On March 30, 1952, Porter Wynn began his ministry at the church. When Mr. Wynn came to the church, average attendance was 90. It reached a peak of 140 in 1957 and averaged 120 the year he left.

In 1955 a large nursery was built on the third floor of the church building. In 1956 an organ was purchased for \$1,000 and land on Graves Ave. was purchased for \$6,000. At a congregational meeting in July of 1957, it was decided to build a parsonage first on the land. Mr. Wynn had a wife and four children and the small apartment in the church building was not sufficient for his needs. Digging for the basement began on December 15.

Porter Wynn resigned and left Erlanger July 13, 1958 and William Blake began his ministry on August 17. The parsonage was completed the first of August and a surprise house warming was

given on August 29.

The church continued to grow throughout the 1960s. Ground breaking for the basement unit was held on April 10, 1960 and the church sold their property on Commonwealth and began meeting in the basement on October 29.

William Blake resigned in August of 1961 and Wendell Cox began preaching on October 22.

Construction of the main floor of the church building began in October, 1963 and the first service was held in the new structure on March 29, 1964 with a record number 255 people in worship. The cost was \$80,000.

Mr. Cox resigned in 1965. Marion Parkey preached here from 1965 to 1969 and David Vaughn came in 1969 and was the minister until 1975.

In 1960, the average attendance was 120. By 1970, the average attendance was 230. The continuing growth prompted a need for more classroom space. A two story apartment building behind the church building came up for sale in 1975 for \$40,000 and the congregation voted to purchase it on November 12.

At the end of 1976, the option on the apartment building next to the one the church had purchased came up and the church decided instead of buying the apartment they would sell the one they owned and build a new three story addition on the existing

church building. This action was approved on January 12, 1977 at a cost not to exceed \$110,000.

Steve Hooks, a professor at the Cincinnati Bible College and student at the Hebrew Union College served as minister here from 1975-1977.

Marshall Hills preached at Erlanger from 1977-1978 and David Monroe served from 1978-1983. Derrell Cone worked here from 1983-1989 and John D. McArthur, Jr. came in 1990.

Since 1990, the church has spent thousands of dollars to update and remodel her property. A new stage, new sound system, new doors, new roof, new carpeting, central air to all three floors, repaved parking lot, new sign, new windows and new bathrooms have all been added.

Money recieved from the estate of charter member, Gracie Cleek, was used to pay off the church mortgage in 1994.

In the first fifty years of this church, 950 individuals have been immersed or placed their membership with this congregation. Countless more have attended and been influenced by this ministry. Approximately 40 young people from the Erlanger Church of Christ have gone on to Bible college and entered some form of ministry. And this work has been felt around the world with missionaries serving in India and other countries who have been motivated and encouraged because of the work in this place.

MINISTERS OF THE ERLANGER CHURCH OF CHRIST

Grayson Ensign July 20, 1947 - April 18, 1951
Mark Elliott May 20, 1951 - December 9, 1951
Porter Wynn. March 30, 1952 - July 13, 1958
William Blake. August 17, 1958 - August 27, 1961
Wendell Cox. October 22, 1961 - February 21, 1965
Marion Parkey. April 25, 1965 - April 6, 1969
David Vaughan. June 29, 1969 - May 25, 1975
Steve Hooks. August 3, 1975 - August 1, 1976
Marshall Hills October 26, 1976 - December 31, 1977
David Monroe April 1, 1978 - September 11, 1983
Derrell Cone August 1, 1984 - September 8, 1989
John McArthur. September 13, 1990 -

CHARTER MEMBERS OF THE ERLANGER CHURCH OF CHRIST

Irene Bungenstock*	James Rankins*
Gracie Lee Cleek*	Welden Ranshaw
Dorothy Cummins*	Glenn Jane Reutman
Richard Ebenschweiger*	Jewel Riddell
Mildred Ebenschweiger	Gary Riddell
Richard Ebenschweiger, Jr.	Monty Riddell
Ada Edmonds*	Collins Simpson*
Pete Foster	William Smith*
Lucy Flenders*	Mildred Smith*
Jessica Floyd	Sadie Lee Snyder*
Fred Foster	William Sorrell*
Mrs. Fred Foster*	Mrs. William Sorrell*
Freddy Foster	Charles Stephens*
Lucille Graham*	Francis Stephens*
Marjorie Graham	Mary Helen Stephens
Norma Graham*	Margaret Stephens
Shirley Graham	Warren Stephens*
Mildred Groger*	Mrs. Warren Stephens*
Mrs. Kathryn Herrick*	Matt Whitfield*
Billy Herrick	Mrs. Matt Whitfield*
Betty Herrick	Jarvey Williams*
Dorothy Herrick	Odessa Williams*
Kathryn Herrick	
Ray Herrick	(* = deceased)8
May Houston*	
Kate Jervold*	
Robert Jones	
Lida Keeney*	
Francis Kemper	
Nancy Jane Kemper	
Aubrey Martin*	
Lida Catherine Martin	
Carol Maxwell	
Walter McClure*	
Bessie McClure*	
Edgar McClure	
Mary Lois McClure	
Alvin McGee*	
Grace McGee*	
Gene Oldham*	
Fannie Poole*	
Tammy Poole*	