

**Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
First and Van Trees  
Washington, Indiana**

Central Christian Church in Washington, Indiana is a fine example of a church that harnessed the passionate spirit that emerged in the late 1920's. A desire for a more democratic form of church leadership led 19 Board members of the First Christian Church to resign and publish a public notice of plans to hold a Bible School gathering. That first meeting in March 1928 was held at the local City Hall and drew 308 in attendance. The numbers grew by the following week and by the end of that month, the group had arranged to meet in a nearby gym. Bible School leaders then arranged to secure an evangelist to lead a meeting which resulted in yet another increase that brought membership to more than 500.

This early success was enough to assure leaders that the church had a solid future so trustees were elected and plans for a new building were pursued. By March 1929, the construction had reached a point that allowed the congregation to gather for the first time in its present location on the corner of First and Van Trees. Attendance that day exceeded 650. By Easter that year, attendance exceeded 750 and church membership reached 600.

In 1946, on its 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the congregation burned its mortgage having completely paid for its facility despite the challenges of the Great Depression and the Second World War. As it celebrated this great success, the church also rejoiced in its efforts to promote Christian unity in the community and beyond. Support of the United Christian Missionary Society was prominently noted in the newspaper article announcing the debt free status of the church.

The congregation would expand its facilities with the purchase and later construction of parsonages through the years and a significant renovation project of its main building completed in 1961.

When the church celebrated its 60 anniversary in 1988, it collected dozens of letters recalling joyful memories of church life from its current and past members. At the time, they also compiled a list of 42 persons who were 50-year members and 48 who were 40-year members. Their memories celebrated a history of visiting evangelists, beloved pastors, and faithful friends who shared the struggles and joys of life. They remembered ice cream socials and turkey dinners as well as Sunday School classes and women's organizations and youth groups.

Rev. James K. Payton is the 24<sup>th</sup> person who has served the church as interim or installed minister. He arrived in June 1987 and is currently in his 27<sup>th</sup> year as Minister. The church has also seen some of its members pursue education in preparation for ministry including Joe Wick who was ordained here in 1939 and went on to serve many congregations including East Side Christian Church in Evansville.