



**First Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
103 School Street, PO Box 360
Oaktown, IN 47561-0360
(812) 745-3811
fccoaktown@wirelessilliana.com
www.oaktownfcc.org**

Celebrating 150 Years
1863 – 2013



In 1863, Bro. Joseph Wolfe, held meetings in Oaktown in an old 18' x 36' log school house which was known as West Union Seminary. That same year he organized the Christian Church but it did not flourish. In 1863, evangelists from the State Association of the Christian Church were sent out to establish, reorganize and strengthen churches over Indiana. One of the evangelists, Benjamin C. Sherman, came to Oaktown and led a meeting that resulted in the reorganization of the Church on May 5, 1866. The church faced serious questions, difficult challenges and early divisions but grew over the years with the development of Sunday School, a women's group, and development of its buildings.

The current building was dedicated in 1906 with the addition of a Fellowship Hall, kitchen and classrooms in 1961. With a long list of ministers with short tenures, the lay leadership was strong and led the church through the Great Depression and times of war. The land adjoining the church was purchased and a parsonage built in 1936. It was moved to a new location and replaced with a newer parsonage in 1975. Worship services have been enhanced with updated audio and video equipment.

The church has been blessed by a long list of ministers through the years and at times even shared ministers with the Carlisle Christian Church. Our current pastor, Rev. Todd A. Barnhizer, has held the longest pastorate in our church's history having been with us since August 2002.

During this time, we have become a church with a passion for outreach to our community. We have developed ecumenical partnerships with over a dozen agencies, groups and churches which have allowed us to establish:

- A food pantry, "God's Pantry", serving up to 200 hundred families in the Northern Knox & Southern Sullivan counties each month distributing nearly 10,000 lbs. of food and necessities monthly.
- A Summer migrant worker & family ministry, "A Sharing of Christ", which includes a free medical clinic, adult GED & English classes, summer school for elementary age children of the migrant workers, clothing, and Spanish speaking worship services.
- A LOGOS Youth Ministry that about 40 youth participate in each Wednesday night during the school year - many of these from the surrounding community and being otherwise unchurched.
- A School Supply Ministry which serves 45 to 50 youth each year.
- A Community Vacation Bible School in partnership with the Oaktown United Methodist Church.

- Participation in Samaritan’s Purse Shoebox Ministry. Each year our fills and pays the shipping charges of 100 shoeboxes with small toys, candy, hygiene products, and more to be sent to children around the world ensuring that they will have a present to open on Christmas.
- We have also supported the general ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and co-sponsored a subscription to the publication “The Parish Paper” so it can be accessed online by every Disciple congregation & member in the Region at indianadisciples.org.

We are humbled by the various ways in which our church has been recognized for its ministries as an example to other congregations; we give all praise and glory to God for whom “...all things are possible”:

- In 2010 the Oaktown congregation was chosen for the Ecumenical Church of the Year Award for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana.
- At the 14th Annual Women’s Quadrennial Assembly in Greensboro North Carolina on June 27, 2010 General Minister & President Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States & Canada delivered the closing sermon on Sunday morning calling on attendees to awaken their 'little part of the world...to baptize, teach and make Disciples in surprising ways and surprising places. "After 4- and a half days, it's time to awaken the world, and to get out there and make a difference," she said. Watkins used the example of First Christian Church (DoC) in Oaktown, Ind., which with an average of only 65 in attendance on Sunday mornings, provides a food pantry, English language programs, school supplies for children in need, a health clinic, and a LOGOS Bible study program.
- In March 2011 God’s Pantry was featured in a four page article written by Bernie Schmitt titled “*God’s Pantry; A true Christian effort of neighbors helping neighbors*” in **Boomer** Magazine, an Indiana regional publication.
- At the 2011 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Nashville, TN, Oaktown was one of several churches featured with GMP Rev. Dr. Watkins in a video used during her State of the Church Address for its ministries of “Being” the body of Christ in the world. Watkins interview, along with our pastor’s, was conducted here in our Sanctuary.
- In the Fall of 2011 Oaktown was one of five churches selected from across the nation for a seven page article written by independent reporter G. Jeffrey MacDonald titled “*Faith, Family, and Food*” in **Congregations** Magazine, the Alban Institute’s national publication. The churches were chosen for their ministries that were actively addressing issues of poverty, family support, education, and religious instruction. The Alban Institute’s mission “... is to provide clergy and lay leaders with practical, research-based information and ideas for effective ministry as they grapple with an ever-changing environment.”
- The congregation has also received the denominations *Excellence in Evangelism Award* four times in the last ten years.

The closing paragraph of our most recent Historical account begins with these words written in 2006:

“Thus ends an abbreviated account of 143 years of history of the Oaktown Christian Church. Henceforth, we will make history, rather than write it.”

