

**Purpose**

- To learn the history of South Side Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

**Materials**

- Bible
- Hand outs

**Background Information**

Some of you think that South Side Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has always been here on the west side of Lima. Many people think that this is new church and only started when this building was built. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am going to take you back in history and tell you all about our church.

On January 10, 1897 forty people who were members of the West Wayne Street Church of Christ met to establish a new “mission”. That church is now called Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). They soon changed their mind about making it a mission, they decided to form a new church, and were chartered on March 2, 1897. They rented an unused frame church building that was just south of the river bridge on South Main St. Their first Worship service was held on the first Sunday in April in 1897. Within two years, in March 1899, a building fund was started and a lot was purchased. This lot was on the northwest corner of East Kibby Street and South Central Avenue. They spent \$800.00 for the land. They started building on June 29, 1899. At this time they had about 90 members in the congregation. At first they met in a tent on the land and just a few weeks after construction started they began meeting in the basement. The building was completed and dedicated on June 10, 1900. The minister then was Rev. Clarence Mitchell.

In April 1914 an educational wing was added because Sunday School was added to the church calendar and more space was needed. The Sunday they dedicated the new wing they had 621 in Sunday School. (That sure beats what we have today.) They averaged about 500 each Sunday. To show how large and strong they were the church also had an orchestra. The orchestra started in 1914 and continued until 1950.

By early 1927 the worship area of the church was remodeled and totally turned around. At this time they also up-dated the educational wing. It’s hard to believe, but at that time Sunday School was bigger than Worship. A plan was formed in 1928 by Rev. E.J. Penhorwood (you heard about him last week) to put Sunday School and Worship into one

service. They had many varied activities planned. One of the activities was to build a cross of flowers by the children of the church. Some people in our congregation may remember this activity. It might be fun to start this again on Easter Sunday.

The organ was added to the church in April 1929. That was one of three events that happened in 1928-29 to enhance our building. Behind the baptismal a painting of the Jordan River was done by Ross Deniston, one of our members. In 1930 the sanctuary painting "Christ in Gethsemane" was painted right onto a canvas glued to the wall by Robert Vitur, a German artist living in Lima. The Good Samaritan Sunday School Class paid for this. If you look up at the wall on your left during Worship you will see the very same painting.

By 1937 the church was still growing and had a membership of 1,300 people. Also in 1937 they started publishing "The Friendly Visitor". It was intended to keep every family in our congregation up-to-date on what was happening. I find it interesting that we still do the same today. Doesn't "The Friendly Visitor" come in the mail to your home each month? Each month take a look at it and see if you are aware of all we do. We have been able to keep a history of our church by looking back at old issues of this publication.

Over the years the women of South Side have been very active in the building of the church membership and its outreach program. Our CWF is still in operation today and has several small groups of women that participate. They do many activities to help our church. They hold "bazaars" or bake sales in the Family Life Center several times a year. They collect baby clothes, warm mittens and hats to give to the people in our community that need help.

A new expansion and remodeling was done again in 1960. At that time they also blacktopped the parking area.

In June 1960 one of the grand ladies of our congregation died and left South Side money in her will. The Conrath Fund was established and is still providing funds for our church today. We are now in the process of installing a plaque and renaming the Family Life Center to honor Mrs. Conrath. This fund has helped pay for our new building and it also provides money for our church leaders to go to conferences and get additional educational.

In 1967 money was left to the church to buy land and build a parsonage in Country Club Hills. It was intended to provide a home for our preacher. That property still exists but today Rev. and Mrs. Adams own the home and live there.

Our name used to be South Side Church of Christ but when a new constitution was adopted in 1975 we changed to our present name, South Side Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Over the years our church has sponsored three refugee families. They paid their way to America and helped them get established in the community. They were established in their own apartment, helped to get employment and emotional support was offered to help them adjust. The three families were from Chile and Vietnam.

Our first family retreat was held at Camp Christian in 1979. We will be having another family retreat in October this year. We will be staying two nights and having many fun activities over that time. Talk to your family about coming. It is such fun and will give you a chance to see Camp Christian before you go there for summer camp.

Because of the condition of our church building in 1991-or 1902 we began to research and see what solutions we could find to fix the problem of the building deterioration. Over a long five-year process we studied the problem and came up with three possible solutions. We could: 1 - Remodel and repair our building, 2- Tear down the present building and rebuild on the same land, or 3 – Find land and build a new building. Because some people were so upset at the possibility of leaving this location a lot of time was spent in meeting and open forums discussing what would be best for our congregation. A vote was finally taken and only 5 people did not vote to relocate and build a new building. So the search began and we finally voted and selected land on the west side of town on East Town Road. The land was purchase and paid for. During the time that the land was being paid for we made plans for a new building. The church building was put up for sale and construction was started on our new church home plot. Through God's guidance and blessing our old church building was sold quickly to Head Start. If you go down Kibby now you can see the building and how they have transformed it into a facility for children.

Well the building sold and we had to get out but we had no place to go. We moved out and for the next 18 months we met each week at the Civic Center. It was very difficult to create an atmosphere of worship in this very large auditorium. But with God's help we did it. We were also forced to be very flexible because it was necessary to move around within the civic center facility because of their schedule. This did give us a challenge and made us very appreciative of what we had. During this time we were also very blessed to have an increase in our attendance. All the builders and architects told us we would lose members.

On the first Sunday of April in 1999 we held our first worship service in our new building. It was very difficult for some of our family to leave the building down on Kibby because we had such a history there and they had many wonderful memories of events that happened in that facility. To help with the transition the painting was removed from the wall at the front of the sanctuary and placed upon our north wall of the sanctuary. It was a difficult task to remove the painting from the wall so that it could be cleaned and framed. Mr. Carl Corello took a putty knife and a spray bottle of water and removed the painting an inch at a time. The glass windows you see behind you in the windows between the sanctuary and the narthex were also salvaged from the old building. This helps us combine the old with the new. Hopefully it made the transition easier.

Wow I didn't realize we had such a history. Did you?

Over the past 107 years we have had a total of 15 ministers. However three of these men had a combined service time of 83 years. Rev. Pen was here 43 years; Rev. Pete Smith was here 13 years, and Rev. Adams was here 27 years. This is quite a record for any church. We are very fortunate to have these three fine leaders to guide us and support us in doing God's work. Go look on the wall in the Parlor to see photographs of each of our ministers. Rev. Cosart (Pastor Todd) has been here the last 3 years.

