

A Century of Christian Service

1853 - 1953



The First Baptist Church

Delaware, Ohio

JAMES B. STEPHENSON, MINISTER

AUGUST 9, 1953

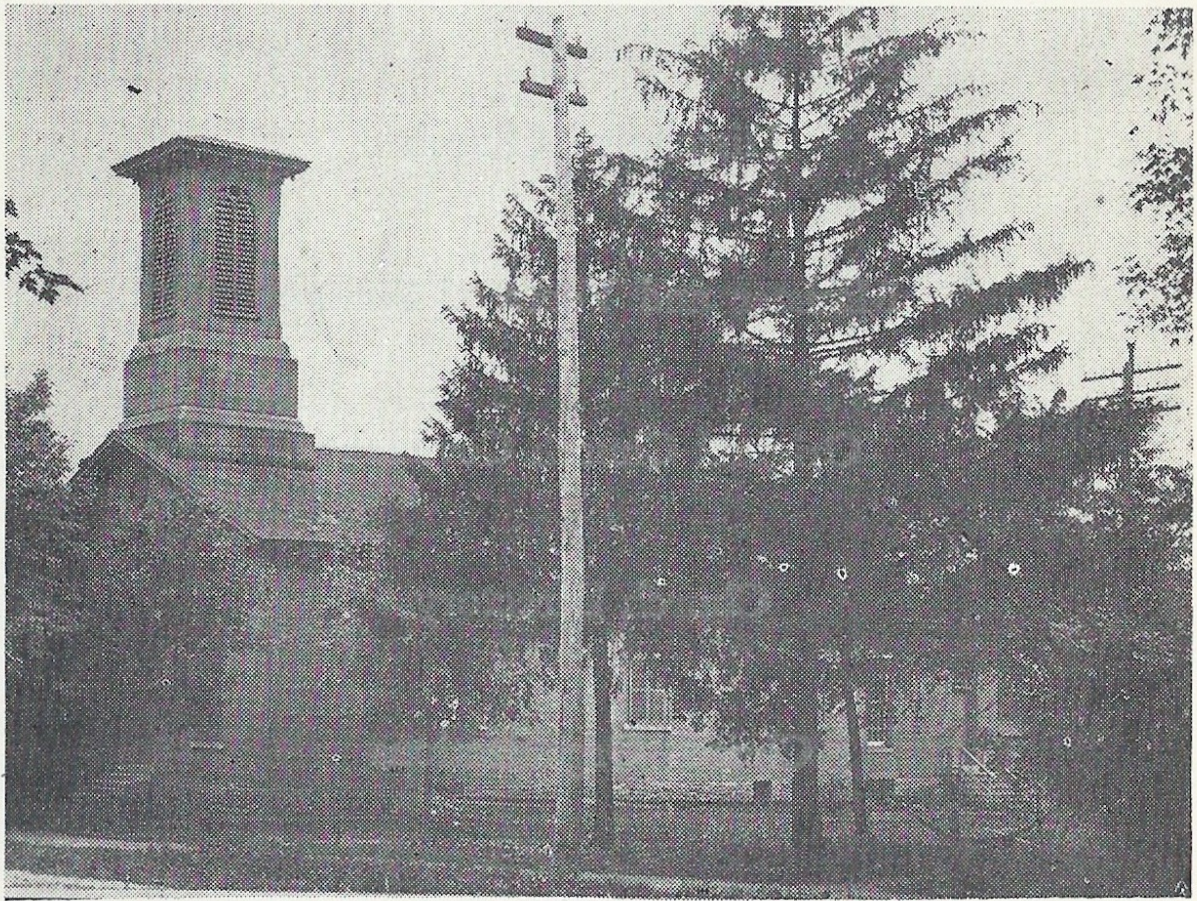
History of Church

Minister and Years of Service

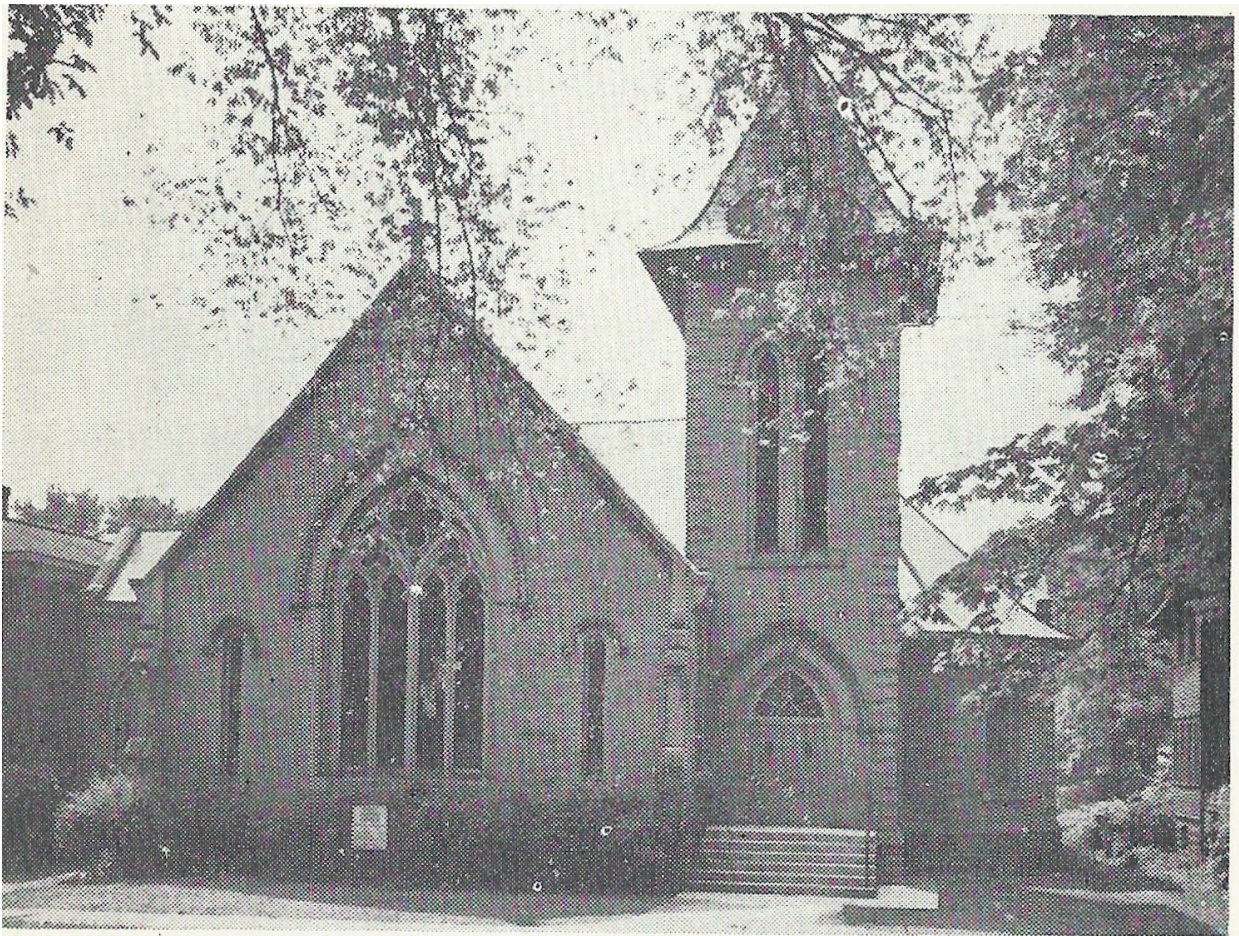
Original Church Covenant

Church Directory

Church Organizations



1853



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

One hundred years ago, on February 9, 1853, in Delaware, Ohio, a little group of people met in the Presbyterian Church. They were Baptists by faith and did not feel at home in the atmosphere of the churches already established in this little town. And so they were meeting to discuss the possibility of forming a Society of Regular Baptists. Even at this first meeting, these men and women were looking forward to the organization of a Regular Baptist Church and discussing the purchase of a lot on which to build a place of worship. The Rev. E. G. Wood acted at moderator of the meeting and became the first pastor of the church. At the very next meeting, on February 22, the group raised a subscription of \$470.00 and at a meeting on March 28 authorized the purchase of half a lot on North Franklin Street "for \$450.00 or \$475.00 exclusive of the building on it." (a stable!) This lot was purchased and on it stands today the First Baptist Church of Delaware, Ohio.

The group continued to meet in the Presbyterian Church for some time. The meeting of July 7 was an important one for two reasons. First, the Society decided to negotiate with the president and the directors of the Templar Association for the use of Templar Hall on Sandusky Street for Sunday services and for "such evenings and afternoons as can be agreed upon to have covenant and business meetings." The second important item is contained in the following resolution: "Resolved that we meet at the Templar Hall at 1/2 past 10 o'clock A.M. on the first Saturday of next August for the purpose of becoming organized or constituted as the 'First Regular Baptist Church of Delaware, Ohio.' "

The sixth of August was a big day. A council of some thirty delegates had been appointed to consider and act on the request of the Delaware Society. These delegates came

from the Baptist churches of Columbus, Berlin, Sunbury, Norton, Radnor and Mill Creek. On the morning of August 6, the Council met at Templar Hall to consider the propriety of recognizing the Delaware Society or Conference as an independent church. After examining the letters of discipline and recommendation of the members, the Council unanimously approved the Delaware Conference as such. Of the members examined fifteen were men and twenty-two, women. Thus, with a membership of thirty-seven persons the First Baptist Church in Delaware was established.

In the afternoon recognition services for the new church were held. In addition to the regular program, the venerable Rev. J. Drake was asked to make any remarks he might care to make. Mr. Drake, known as Father Drake, had long worked for a Baptist Church in Delaware. As early as the 1820's he had led a movement to establish such a church, but the effort ended in failure. However, Father Drake never ceased in his interest, and, to quote from the report of the meeting, he spoke of "his unfaltering Faith that God would build up a Baptist Church in Delaware, and, as he had long prayed for that object, this occasion that had convened us was full of comfort to his soul. For in the Recognition of that Church he saw a house in their own midst for those Disciples who had long suffered either privation or great inconvenience in attending upon the worship of God."

The new church had previously adopted the Articles of Faith as published in the *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* and had drawn up its own Covenant, printed elsewhere in this booklet. The wording of the Covenant may seem a bit old-fashioned, but its engagements, if sincerely observed, make a fine pattern for a truly Christian life. They are as good today as they were a hundred or even a thousand years ago. They are timeless.

At the close of the recognition services on August 6, the newly constituted church was called to order by the Rev.

Mr. Wood for its first business meeting. At this meeting the church elected to join the Columbus Baptist Association. It remained in that Association until 1913, when, at the urgent request of Mt. Vernon and the Mad River Association, it withdrew to help form the new Marion Association, of which it remained a member until 1928. That year marked the 75th anniversary of the church, and at the anniversary service on August 5 the church voted to ask for reinstatement in the Columbus Association, of which it is now a member.

The little church struggled valiantly to maintain itself. Its membership grew slowly, and it has never been large. Those were dedicated and determined people who established the Baptist Church in Delaware and they worked and sacrificed to get what they wanted. The greatest problem was, of course, financial. (What a familiar sound that word must have even today for most churches!) In those old days there was no definite, all-inclusive budget. Subscriptions were raised, apparently, for specific purposes, and the list most persistently circulated was for the pastor's salary. Today the modest sum of \$400.00 a year, plus \$48.00 for a house, seems fantastic. And \$40.00 a year as rent for a place of worship such as Templar Hall seems almost incredible. But money was hard come by in those days. The war years and their aftermath did not make things easier. In spite of aid from the Ohio Baptist Convention, the church was almost constantly in debt. But its members never faltered in their purpose, and from the beginning they had constantly in mind the building of a "meeting house" of their own. In March, 1857, a building committee was appointed, and from that time until the completion of the work the records are filled with details of the trials and tribulations which attended on the venture. To mention one or two of the difficulties, the steeple was improperly placed and in other ways was not up to specifications, and it had to be changed before the building could be accepted. Then there was the carpenter who ab-

sconded, leaving his work unfinished. But the building of stone and brick, begun in August, 1957, on the lot purchased four years before, was finally completed in June, a year later, at a cost of \$2515.73, "exclusive of painting." On the "Saturday before the 2nd Sabbath in July, 1958, the Church met in their new meeting house for the 1st time as a Covenant meeting." And on August 5, almost five years to the day after the Regular Baptist Society had been recognized as the First Regular Baptist Church of Delaware, the church dedicated its new place of worship with a three-day service. The minutes record that the house was filled and many who came could not get in. They also note the friendliness and liberality of other citizens of the town.

There is a great hiatus in the records of our church. The clerk's record book for the first sixteen years is still preserved. Some of the writing is badly faded but much of it is still very clear. Until 1869, Mr. James Eaton, one of the leaders in the church, acted as clerk. The Eaton family is commemorated by their gift of the beautiful window at the rear of the present sanctuary. In the disastrous flood of 1913 all records except the book mentioned above were destroyed. They were kept in the home of Albert J. Ryan, then clerk, at the corner of Union St. and Central Ave., an area deeply covered by the flood waters.

One very important event which occurred in this period was the remodeling of the old church in 1897 during the pastorate of the Rev. Albert Read. The interior of the sanctuary was remodeled, a new chancel and baptistry built, and a pipe organ installed. A Sunday School room was constructed on the north side, the facade was completely changed, with entrances to the north and the south, a new tower was built over the north entry, stained glass windows were installed and the outer walls were faced with yellow brick. The beautiful windows were gifts from various persons and organizations in the church. The pipe organ, which

still functions well, was the gift of Mr. Morgan Savage, who, although not a member of the church, was interested in its welfare and grateful for the care given him, an aged invalid, by one of the church's devoted members. Mr. Savage's name is perpetuated also by the lovely round window on the south wall of the sanctuary. The church remains essentially as it was then remodeled, except for some recent changes which will be mentioned later.

A Sunday School was organized in 1854 and became an important part of the church. Since 1913, at least, it has served an important function: in the several interims between pastors the Sunday School has carried on the work of the church and maintained the Wednesday evening prayer meetings. The Baptist Church of Delaware still observes that week-day evening service for worship and Bible study.

The Baptist denomination has always been deeply interested and very active in missionary work and the Delaware Church has been no exception. No record has been found of when it first organized its mission work, but it is certain that both Home and Foreign Missions were receiving contributions from this church long before 1900. The Women's Organization and the Phyllis Beckley Mission Circle now carry on the work in this field. We are very proud to have in our membership Mrs. Carolyn Gleich White, who has served as an active missionary in India and who, since her return to Delaware, has been one of our most faithful and most inspiring workers.

In August and October of 1928, during the pastorate of the Rev. H. Schuyler Foster, the church celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary. On Sunday, August 5, the pastor preached the anniversary sermon and the service was concluded by the observance of the Lord's Supper. On that occasion the congregation was surprised and pleased to see lovely blue velvet curtains masking the baptistry arch and the choir entrance. These curtains were the gift of Mr. Foster and his family. Sunday, October 7, had been designated as

Homecoming Day. Many former and out-of-town members returned to help celebrate that day or sent letters to be read. The Sunday School held a special anniversary service and the Rev. E. R. Graves of Granville preached the sermon, after which the Lord's Supper was observed. A covered dish dinner at the church followed, and in the afternoon the final anniversary service was held. On this occasion the address was delivered by the Rev. T. F. Chambers, D.D., secretary of the Ohio Baptist Convention. The reading of letters from former pastors and members formed a part of the program. A booklet issued at the time preserves a record of this happy occasion.

Mention has been made of the financial support given to the Delaware Church by the Ohio Baptist Convention. Until very recently this support, in varying amounts, continued through the years. In later years it was designed to assist the church in work with Baptist students at Ohio Wesleyan University. The Rev. Mr. Foster and his wife were especially active in their efforts to interest the students in the church work. Many members had long regretted our dependence on the Convention; finally, in 1950, the church voted to ask for no further financial aid from the denomination. It now stands firmly on its own feet. For three years it has met a decidedly increased budget courageously and successfully and has great faith in the future. In this, our centennial year, our budget is the largest in the history of the church.

As for work among the students, the Baptist Church is now associated with the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in a United Fellowship for University students. Our minister, the Rev. James B. Stephenson, is very much interested in this group and the attendance of students at our Sunday service has shown a marked increase. A number of these young men and women have been taking an active part in the church work, notably in the

choir, and for the past three years we have enjoyed the services of a student pastor. These young men have served the church well and have been of great assistance to Mr. Stephenson.

Until recent years the Delaware church was handicapped by the lack of a parsonage. It became increasingly difficult to secure a minister when no parsonage was provided. As a matter of fact, Mr. Foster accepted the call to the Delaware church under the impression that a home was included. Soon after his pastorate began, a movement to raise a parsonage fund was started in the Sunday School, and Mrs. Rufus Crane, who made the first contribution, was given charge of the fund. It was a project dear to the heart of the pastor, but the fund grew very slowly. Finally, when a good opportunity offered, Mr. Foster, looking forward to his retirement, bought a home on West William St. At last, in 1941, funds from the estate of Mrs. A. J. Ryan, which she had willed to the church, made the purchase of a parsonage possible. Besides the parsonage fund, money from the Mitchell estate known as the Loomis fund was added to that from the Ryan estate, and early in 1941 the Bartholomew house, just south of the church, was purchased. In November of that same year the last payment on the parsonage was made and it became the property of the church, free of debt. At a Watch Night service on December 31, the note covering the final indebtedness was burned and a framed copy of Mrs. Ryan's will was presented to the church by the trustees.

In 1938 Mr. Foster retired, becoming our first pastor emeritus, and the Rev. Morgan L. Williams accepted the call to the pulpit. For a number of years Mr. Williams continued to live in Columbus, where he was carrying on studies at Ohio State University and commuted to Delaware to perform his pastoral duties. Early in 1943 he moved his family to the parsonage in Delaware and, in addition to his work as pastor, taught in the Naval Flight Preparatory School

then being conducted at Ohio Wesleyan. Mr. Williams, who left in 1947 to accept a position as head of a boys' school in Montour Falls, New York, is our only living ex-pastor. Mr. Foster, after his retirement, was called back to service in Oberlin, Ohio, for a time. Later he sold his home in Delaware and bought a place in DeLand, Florida, where he died in 1944. His widow, Mrs. Florence Foster, still lives at their home there. Both have been held in great affection by the church here.

In the last few years the greatest improvements have been made in the church since it was remodeled in 1897. Speaking of improvements, it is impossible in this brief history, to mention all the hours spent and all the sacrifices made by many earnest and devoted members who have given freely of their time and skill in helping to make many of the improvements and to install others. We do honor to them in this brief, very inadequate paragraph.

Among the recent improvements, the greatest is the refurnishing of the sanctuary. Like manna from Heaven came the gift from an unknown donor of a substantial sum to be used to replace the unsightly chair-seats in the auditorium. The work was begun in 1947. Beautiful, as well as comfortable, pews were installed; the chancel was squared and re-floored where necessary; a new chancel screen to match the pews was built; new carpet was laid in the aisles and covered the chancel. Thanks to the generous gift of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Via, the chancel was refurnished also. The handsome chairs and pulpit are in the same pattern as the pews and chancel screen. This gift is in memory of the donors' parents. Mrs. Via has also contributed a lovely communion plate, an heirloom inherited from her father.

Our new minister, the Rev. Mr. Stephenson, arrived in the midst of these alterations, and all services were held in the Sunday School room. On Sunday, October 3, exactly fifty years after the first remodeling of the church, Mr.

Stephenson and the congregation had the pleasure of holding a dedication service in what we consider the most beautiful sanctuary in Delaware.

Additional gifts have added to the beauty and dignity of the sanctuary. In memory of their parents, the Misses Wagner have given a communion table in keeping with the other furnishings, and the deacons and trustees (whose names are to be found in the directory) have provided handsome new offering plates. Thanks to a project undertaken by Mrs. Ernestine Frost, a cross and candle sticks now adorn the table. Mrs. Frost undertook this project as a memorial to Miss Alice Whittier. Miss Whittier was the first Public Health Nurse in Delaware and pioneered the services now taken over by the city and county. Yet she found time for very active work in the church. As her work in Delaware had exerted a great influence in the community, an opportunity was given to all who wished to contribute to the fund. The success of the project is a testimonial to the unfaltering faith and the untiring efforts of Mrs. Frost. She and her father, Mr. McClain, gave new baptistry lights at the same time the Whittier memorial was presented to the church.

Another great improvement is to be seen in the new steps and platform and in the new doors at the north entrance. The new approach was made possible by a bequest from the late Dr. Mae Mills, and the doors were a project of the Nithfus Class. The Whatever Class contributed a door-stop to the project. The church is also grateful for the fine new tables in the dining room. They are the gift of Prof. and Mrs. Rufus Crane, Prof. Crane having made the tables himself. These have even served as models for the tables in the new Parish House of Asbury Church. The latest gift, much needed new hymnals, comes from Miss Pauline Nash, who has kindly accepted contributions from other friends wishing to show honor to her mother. The gift is a memorial to the late Mrs. Eugene Nash, who, until her death,

was the oldest member of the church and had served long years and to the very last on the Board of Deaconesses. She is greatly missed and can well be included in the quotation with which this rather random history ends, a tribute to all the patient, loyal members whose faith and works have kept the little church alive, quoted from the booklet used on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary:

No estimate can compute the sacrificial value of those modest members who during the past [one hundred years] have made the history of this church a benediction and an inspiration to countless others. They were devout men and women whose record lies like a quiet and fragrant path across the distant years. No scale can measure the influence of those Pastors, Deacons and members whose lives were instinct with a devotion to duty and the right. May this fidelity prove an inspiration to the present membership to similar loyalty and devotion.

MINISTERS

E. G. Wood	1853-1855
Elias George	1855-1856
James Harvey	1856-1862
P. Kennedy	1862-1865
D. A. Randall	1866-1867
A. J. Lyon	1867-1870
I. B. Tooms	1870-1871
B. I. George	1873-1874
G. T. Stanbury	1874-1876
T. J. Shephard	1877-1878
J. W. Icenbarger	1878-1884
E. A. Stone	1884-1886
A. H. Bachelder	1886-1889
Charles C. Haas	1891-1892
J. B. Woodland	1892-1894
Albert Read	1896-1899
Homer C. Lyman	1900-1905
Charles M. Brodie	1905-1909
J. B. Shelton	1910-1912
George L. Ford	1914-1916
M. F. Bagby	1917-1919
A. J. Bowser	1921-1924
LeRoy James	1925-1926
H. Schuyler Foster	1926-1938
Morgan L. Williams	1938-1946
C. B. Jones	1946-1947
James B. Stephenson	1947-

STUDENT MINISTERS

David Kagiwada	1950-1951
Alan Geyer	1951-1952
Paul Monroe	1952-1953
Bruce Paton	1953-

COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as in one body in Christ.

We engage therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of all rules of our Saviour, to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

STAFF

Minister	James B. Stephenson
Choir Director	Mrs. Hazen Young
Organist	Edgar Ebenhack
Soloist	W. C. Wickum
Custodian	Rufus Crane

CHURCH OFFICERS

Moderator	John Richards
Assistant Moderator	Rufus Crane
Clerk	Mrs. Carolyn White
Treasurer	C. H. Richard
Financial Secretary	Mrs. Fred Via
Benevolence Treasurer	Mrs. J. F. Gleich
Church School Superintendent	Mrs. Nellie Dick
Finance Committee Chairman	Robert Drey
Flower Committee Chairman	Mrs. C. H. Richards
Decorating Committee Chairman	Mrs. Ernestine Frost
Music Committee Chairman	Mrs. Hazen Young
Board of Deacons	L. F. Gabriel, Chairman Harold Byerly, C. H. Richards, Robert Drey, Fred Via
Board of Trustees	John Richards, Chairman Fred Via, Guy Roberts, Harold Byerly, Charles Eliot
Board of Deaconesses	Mrs. Nellie Dick, Chairman Miss Pauline Nash, Mrs. L. W. Glaze
Board of Education	Miss Pauline Nash, Chairman Mrs. Homer Boblitt, Mrs. Carolyn White, Miss Laura Wagner, Donald Faulk
Board of Ushers	John Richards, Chairman Donald Faulk, Donald Byerly, James Gregory

CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

The Church School:

Superintendent, Mrs. Nellie Dick
Assistant Superintendent, Donald Faulk
Secretary and Treasurer, Miss Mildred Bowers
Librarian, Donald Patrick
Pianist, Mrs. Harold Byerly

The Women's Organization:

President, Mrs. Charles Eliot
Vice President, Mrs. Harry Coonfare
Secretary, Mrs. Ellis Lehner
Treasurer, Mrs. L. F. Gabriel

The Phyllis Beckley Mission Circle:

President, Mrs. Donald Faulk
Secretary, Miss Dee Meade
Treasurer, Mrs. Elvira Smith
Chairman of White Cross, Mrs. Wm. Dean

Booklet prepared by the following committee

Laura Wagner

Carolyn White

Rufus Crane