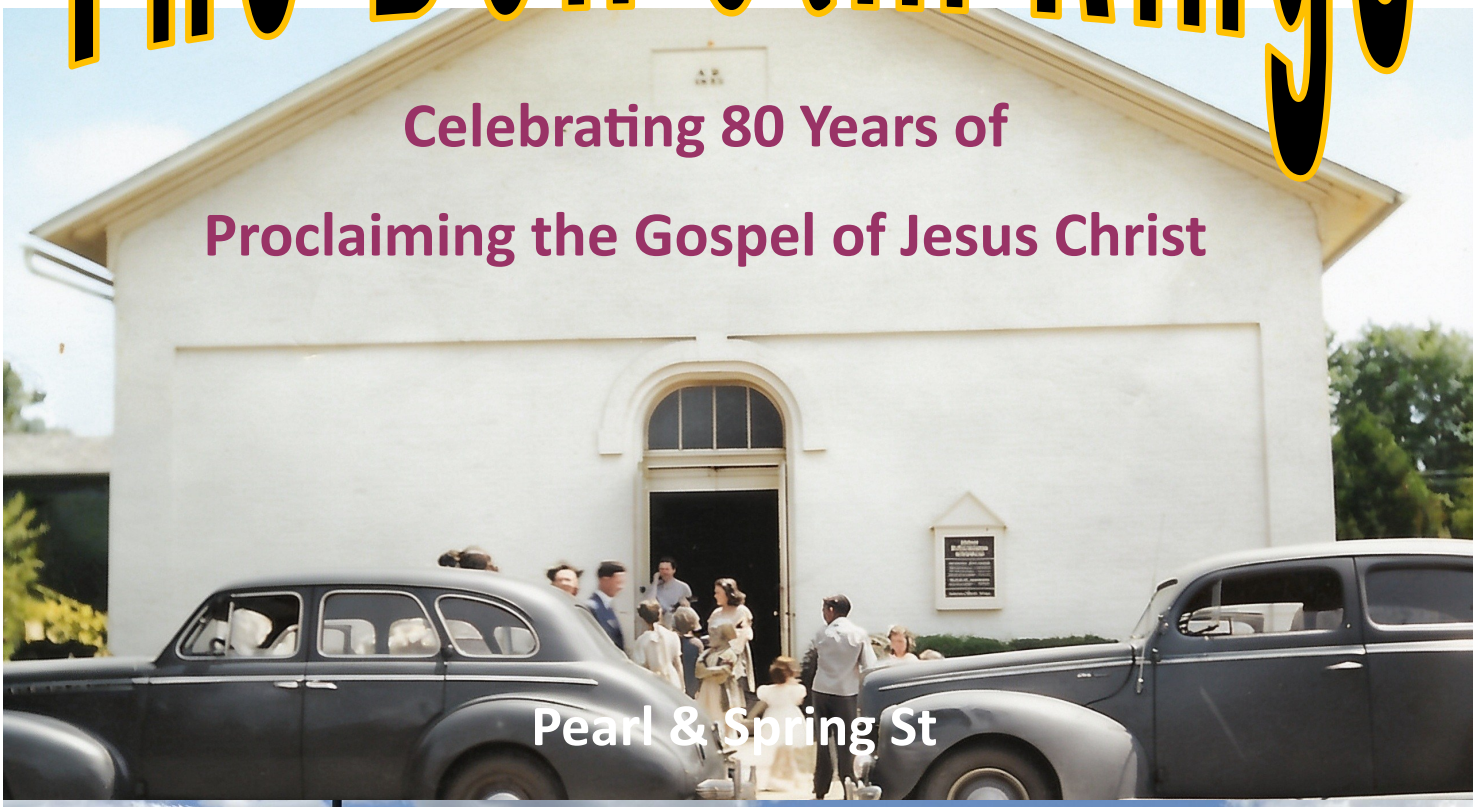
The Bell Still Rings



Celebrating 80 Years of

Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ



Pearl & Spring St



5850 W State Route 41
Covington Ohio

FRIENDSHIP
GRACE BRETHREN CHURCH

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Friendship Grace Brethren Church
Covington, Ohio
Compiled, written and edited by Pastor Roy Glass, III

Our Story



No one, it seems, really takes the time to write down history as it is being lived out. When the time comes that an interest in the preservation of one's story finally arrives, most all who could have given insight into the early days and the people and events that made us into who we are as a people and a church are long gone.

The seed of what would become our church was actually planted by a Pastor from the Brethren Church in Pleasant Hill, Elder Hugh Martin. In the early 1930's, he published some concerns, in his biweekly paper, "The Postscript" about the liberal drift in the teaching at Ashland College. This caused quite a stir in the Brethren denomination that eventually led to his resignation at his church. He began holding a series of evangelistic meetings in and around 1932 at a building built in 1842 in Covington. Over the years it had been used by a variety of different church groups, one of which added the church bell to the top of the building in 1873. Marlin's meetings eventually developed into a new church known as "The Tabernacle". While there were no ties between this new work and the Brethren church, this new church attracted many attenders from the various Brethren groups in and around Covington including a German Baptist by the name of Charles Gantt. Sometime during 1946, internal conflicts lead Pastor Hugh Martin to resign and leave The Tabernacle and instead, turn his focus to his evangelistic meetings and his newspaper publishing. This left a dwindling remnant of dedicated believers without a pastor and without any affiliation with any other church group to turn to for direction and leadership.

Meanwhile, in 1938-39 the conflicts in the Brethren Church over liberalism at their Ashland College came to a head. A number of the Professors at the Ashland Seminary gave up trying to get the college back on track and split from them and began what is now known as Grace College and Seminary in Winona Lake, IN. That lead to a split in the Brethren Church, creating the Ashland Brethren and the Grace Brethren. It was to this new group that the remnant of believers at The Tabernacle turned to for guidance resulting in the start of the First Grace Brethren Church in Covington.

The surviving paper work says that the First Grace Brethren Church of Covington Ohio began on a Monday night, November 18, 1946. 50 plus people had gathered together with representatives of the Central District Mission Board of the less than eight year-old Grace Brethren Fellowship. Those representatives were Art Carey, pastor of the nearby, two-year old, Troy Grace Brethren Church, and Robert Ashman, Pastor of the Peru IN Grace Brethren Church. While there were 54 people in attendance at that meeting including the district representatives and at least 4 children, just 18 names were listed as **charter members** of the church that was born that night:

Forest Alexander, Eva Bowers, Joe & Olive Dombeck, Charles & Marcie Gantt, Gladys Gantt, Edna (Wise) Graham, Fannie (Via) Hoblit, Herbert & Virginia Laughman, Joe & Minnie Noffsinger, Orpha Rice, Ida Thompson, Mary Jane Westfall, Robert Wise and his mother, Thelma (Via) Wise.

By the beginning of the next year, they had caught up on the 3 months back rent for the meeting place and added another month to that amount to get them ahead on what was due. The rent was set at $30.00 per month with the understanding that if the owner, Charles Cornor, decided to sell, they would be given the first opportunity to purchase.



1. Pastor Charles E. Gantt 1946-1948

Soon after Charles Gantt was called as our first Pastor. Here are two articles about a spring and a fall revival service that were held that first full year from the Brethren Missionary Herald that will shed light on our first year of existence.

SPRING REVIVAL AT COVINGTON, OHIO - This was the first meeting held in the new group organized by the Central District Mission Board last fall. There had been a large number of people of the Brethren faith in this community and they had been asking for a Brethren Church for some time. Bro. Charles E. Gantt, a devoted servant of the Lord in this section, had been looked to as a leader, and through his efforts the attention of the Mission Board of the Central District was drawn to the work.

After several consultations, the Board organized them, and asked Brother Gantt to assume the leadership, do the preaching, and generally care for the work in its earlier stages. This he has been doing very acceptably. The section around Covington is largely of Old Order Brethren background, and this speaks for stability and conservative living. Brother Gantt comes from the Old Order Brethren, but felt led to leave that group about 12 years ago. He has a high standing in the whole community in every way.

The attendance at the meetings was fine for a new group. The crowds increased steadily from the first service. The last night there was a full house. New people kept coming with each service. If it had been possible to continue longer, we are sure that a large number of people would have come to Christ and into the church there. But it was all quite new to most of the people. The organization was so young that many wondered about the certainty of its future. We feel sure that the next revival will see a much larger number of decisions, for there is a real need and desire for a church that preaches the whole Word of God in that section.

Woody Newman was with us but one week in this campaign, due to a serious auto accident to his sister in Altoona just before he was to come to this meeting. But the last week was made richer by his inspiring song leading, singing, and in his children's meetings. We had to handle the children's meetings ourself for the first week, and so it was a relief to have him take over the second week. He may return to hold a summer Bible school in that field in June. We hope that he does.

There are some mighty fine people in that district who will support a true, fundamental church. This is an opportune time to establish a strong work there and we trust that the mission board will be able to accomplish this task and take advantage of the opportunity that God is offering to the Brethren.

Our home was with Brother and Sister Gantt during the meetings. He is an unusual man of prayer who actually expects God to answer his petitions! It was a privilege to enjoy their home for two weeks. Brother Gantt already has his eye on another new field in another town not far away, and will likely be over there working at it before too long. Covington is another open door to the Brethren Church. May we occupy faithfully. — **R. Paul Miller, evangelist.**



We of the First Brethren Church of Covington, Ohio, have been wonderfully blessed in the two weeks of revival which closed Sunday evening, May 4. The Lord wrought mightily with us and attendance and interest grew daily from the start unto the very last. Many of the Lord's people have expressed themselves as having received a renewing of spiritual life and strength.

On the last Sunday evening, the pastor asked the audience how many were glad that Brother Miller had come to us and helped us in the meetings and nearly every hand was held high. In like manner they also expressed



their love and appreciation for our Brother Newman, who was with us the last week, circumstances having prevented his coming at the start.

Four fine young people gave their hearts to the Lord, two came for reconsecration, and two other very worthy Christians, **Brother and Sister Roy Lavy**, came forward and expressed their desire to be members with us and to labor with us in the Lord's work here. There was much evidence of the Lord's striving with many others and we deeply regretted the necessity of closing the services so soon. In the children's meetings, which aroused much interest, 1**9 of the oldest made decisions for Christ**, stating that they knew they were sinners and wanted to be saved by trusting in Him who alone has the power to save.

Brethren, please pray for the work in Covington, Ohio, for the adversary of souls would love to crush it out before it grows in strength. We are counting on your support at the throne of God's grace. **— Charles E. Gantt, pastor**. **BMH May 17 1947**

Fall REVIVAL AT COVINGTON, OHIO - The Brethren Church of Covington, Ohio, was organized about one year ago. The church building in which they meet, but do not own as yet, is over 100 years old. An independent work had been carried on in it preceding the organization of the Brethren church. When this independent work was discontinued, the Central District Conference of Brethren Churches assisted in organizing the Brethren church here. Bro. C. E. Gantt was chosen by the church and the mission board to become the pastor.

Upon arriving to hold a three weeks' revival, we soon discovered that there were those, not members of the church, aided and abetted by a few within, who were determined to ruin the new Brethren work. They already had started, and were circulating false reports, some even slanderous, and were doing all possible to cause dissatisfaction among the members and loss of confidence in the community.

It became necessary to bring these issues out in the open and to a head. This was done, and a statement adopted by the church, under the direction of the Mission Board Committee, expressing confidence in the pastor and church. We set ourself, as evangelist, to silence the voice of the enemies and unite the church in "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We believe much progress was made in this. The new Brethren church there has a new standing in the community and we believe will soon move forward under the guidance of the Spirit.

Our fellowship among these Brethren, was enjoyed. We found Brother Gantt, in whose home we stayed, to be sincere and a man of prayer. The presence of many of our former fellow-Christians from Pleasant Hill, where we served as pastor in 1910-13, was appreciated. We regret that conditions were such that we had to devote our service to other than strict evangelism, but feel that a worthy work was accomplished in seeking to "set things in order" for future winning of souls and ingathering of members. — **Charles H. Ashman, evangelist.**

The three weeks of revival effort at the Covington church closed Nov. 9th with nearly a full house in the even-

ing service. In spite of the almost superhuman efforts to destroy the work and its influence here for good, the revival was a success. **Nine precious souls were won to the Lord**, and one young lady came forward in reaffirmation of faith. The pastor also came forward in reconsecration, being severely convicted of the Lord for having unforgiveness toward those who were carrying on the work of persecution.

We also wish to express our appreciation for the faithful labors of our Brother Ashman, and to recommend him to any church in need of an evangelist. His sermons are well prepared and well delivered, and the Lord uses them and him to draw men unto Himself and to promote revival. **— Charles Gantt, pastor. BMH Nov 1947**

A summary of his short ministry here was given in the **Herald** when he resigned

Rev. Charles E. Gantt has resigned his office as pastor of the First Brethren Church of Covington, Ohio. Since he was a local member, he accepted the temporary shepherding of this church at the time of its organization under the Central District Mission Board in November. 1946, and was recalled each year since then.

During the two years the membership increased from the **18 charter members to 41,** including three who are awaiting baptism. **With no outside financial help the church has paid nearly one-third the initial cost of a substantial brick church building, and a new heating system has been installed.** Over the past year Brother Gantt conducted a weekly radio program over WPTW. The membership is an earnest and spiritual group of people looking forward to even greater things for their church and its testimony in the community.

Brother Gantt and his wife are awaiting the Lord's leading in other opportunities for establishing Brethren churches in a manner similar to what has been accomplished in Covington, or any other pastoral capacity the Lord sees fit to open.
BMH Jan 1949

During his short time he also was examined and approved for Licenser and Ordination by the Central District Ministerium and the Church then followed up by Ordaining Pastor Gantt into the Christian Ministry.

After he left us, the **Herald** would go on to publish a short biography of Pastor Gantt when he took on a new role at the Pacific Garden Mission.

“A Brethren preacher is now in charge of all spiritual work at the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago, the place where Billy Sunday was converted. He is Rev. Charles E. Gantt, formerly of Covington, Ohio. His duties at the Mission include preaching each morning, teaching daily, doing personal work, and acting as spiritual advisor to the men.

For many years Brother Gantt himself did not know the Gospel of the grace of God which he proclaims to the men of Skid Row. He was born September 30, 1893, in Union County, Ohio. His parents were Old Brethren, holding a legalistic view of salvation. This teaching never fully satisfied Brother Gantt, though he was baptized into their church. But the salvation-bv-works teaching always left something to be desired, and he was continually seeking that something. Finally he attended a revival meeting led by a former Brethren minister, and from him he learned much about salvation by grace and other doctrines of the Brethren. Later he heard Dr. L. S. Bauman at the Winona Lake Bible Conference and was much helped by him.

Charles Gantt's parents did not believe in higher education, so he was taken out of school at the age of 14 and made manager of his father's farm. He was prepared to override his father's stern command to quit school, but he could not withstand his mother's tears. The rest of his education was gained by home study until recently. In the last 2 years he has audited 3 semesters at Grace Seminary.

After trying several occupations, he settled on farming as a young man. When God called him into the ministry he made a bargain with the Lord: he would preach after he had discharged his financial obligations, paying for the farm, etc. Now he realizes that this was a mistake.

While still farming he became assistant pastor of an independent work with Brethren background in Coving-

ton. Ohio. When the work failed, he gathered the remnants together, and with the help of the Central District Mission Board it was organized as the First Brethren Church of Covington. He became pastor of the church from its organization in November 1946 to January 1949. Since then he has attended Seminary and engaged in some evangelistic work until he went to Pacific Garden Mission.

Mrs. Gantt is the former Miss Maggie Lee Layman, of Lima, Ohio, who was also a member of the Old Brethren Church. They have had two children: Mrs. Gladys Grivy, and Thomas Gantt (deceased).

Charles Gantt is 5 feet, 7 inches tall, weighs 189 pounds, and has blue eyes and brown and gray hair."
BMH Sept 1 1951



Pastor Gantt was back in the area and living in Piqua when he died on January 10, 1966 at the age of 72. **Pastor Forrest Jackson** from the Dayton First Brethren Church led the funeral service at our church. He was assisted by Pastor John Neely from the Troy GBC. He, his wife, Maggie and their son, Thomas, are all buried in Highland Cemetery.

2. Pastor Gerald Teeter 1949 – 1951

By Feb. of 1949, our next pastor had relocated to Covington and began leading the young flock. He came to us unmarried and fresh out of seminary. He was, however, engaged and that summer on June 11, he was united in marriage to Miss Lillian Beasley. From the May 1950 issue of the BMH, we learn that a new Sunday school attendance record of **108** was set at Covington, Ohio, May 14, with 110 in the morning church service. Pastor Teeter was instrumental in organizing a town wide Vacation Bible School with all the churches participating. We don't know what year it was from but here is a picture of one of those years. It was held at the Presbyterian Church that year. Pastor Teeter and his lovely young bride are the embracing couple on the far left.



Community Wide Vacation Bible School
Held at Covington Presbyterian
Led by Paster Gerald Teeter
1950?

3. Pastor John Clarence "Bill" McKillen 1951 – 1952

Our third pastor's term was short but we do have this about his ministry here from the November 1951 **Herald**.

Under the leadership of their new pastor. J. C. "Bill" McKillen, Covington, Ohio, youth and leaders are making big plans for varied activities to attract and hold the young people of their city. A special fund has already been set up for this purpose, and plans include a boys club, regular youth meetings and activities, and the purchase of equipment important to the success of the program.

Recently our National Youth Director Ralph Colburn met with the group for a Halloween party, and led in the devotional time. The "Grim Reaper" put in an appearance, in skit form, and will be remembered by all present.

Less than 6 months later, we have this notice from the **Herald**, "Rev. J. C. McKillen resigned his pastorate at Covington, Ohio, on March 16. On March 2 four people were baptized and received into the church." So even though his time with us was short, he did leave behind some lasting fruit for the kingdom.

4. Pastor James Young 1952 – 1956



By the summer of 52, our next pastor and his family had relocated to Covington to continue the ministry of The First Brethren Church.

We have this from the September issue of the Herald: "The Covington, Ohio, church surprised its pastor, Rev. James Young, and his family with a pantry shower upon their return from the national conference. Since Brother Young has been pastor of the church 2 people have made public confessions of faith in Christ and 1 person made reaffirmation of faith. On August 17 the BYF of the church was reorganized with 18 people present."

By the next January, we were once again having Revival Services, this time lead by Arlene Jackson's brother, Evangelist Bill Smith.

"We were confident from the very outset of the meeting that the Lord was going to work. Our faith was encouraged by the interest, attendance, and decisions made. There were 22 public decisions made during the two weeks — 5 first-time and 17 rededications.

It was a pleasure to work with Bro. James Young, pastor of the church, and to have a share in his untiring labors for the Lord.

As we look back upon this meeting, we are forced to declared: our blessed Lord Jesus Christ has done this work." — **Bill Smith, evangelist**.

We were happy to have five who followed the Lord's command in the rite of Christian baptism by triune immersion.

May the Spirit of God be with our Brother Smith as he continues his service for his Lord in the field of evangelism. — **James O. Young, pastor**.

Pastor Young also got involved on the local level, delivering the baccalaureate sermon May 23 for the Covington High School graduates in 1954.

Like Charles Gantt, Pastor Young also had the privilege of having a short biography published in the **Herald**. This was written to highlight his Ordination into the Brethren ministry while serving as our pastor. Here it is:

"James O. Young was born in Shipshewana, Ind., the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Young, on May 25,

1912. The first 19 years of his life were spent in that community.

After finishing high school in 1931, Mr. Young attended Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge, La. After leaving school he spent eight years in professional music.

On April 21, 1933, he was married to Edith E. Lantz, and to this union were added five children, James B., 20; Kay E., 18; Jerry R.,15; Stephen L., 9; and Edna, 5. All of the children except Edna have received Christ as Saviour, and expect to serve their Lord in some field of service.

In the early spring of 1943, Mr. Young attended an evangelistic service and there for the first time he heard the true gospel message, even though he had been a church member for 22 years. Realizing his lost condition, he received Christ as his personal Saviour. A short tune later he heard his Master's call to fulltime service but resisted that call for four years. After surrendering his will to the Lord he attended Moody Bible Institute, where God provided every need and blessed his ministry. Mr. Young and his family united with the Bethel Brethren Church of Osceola, Ind., December 25, 1949. He conducted a number of evangelistic campaigns. On June 18, 1952, Mr. Young was called to serve as pastor of the First Brethren Church of Covington, Ohio, where the ordination service was held on October 31, 1954.

Dr. Paul Bauman delivered the ordination sermon. Rev. George Kinzie, Rev. Caleb Zimmerman, Rev. Lon Karns, Rev. Harold Etling, Rev. Clair Brickel, and Frank Brill assisted in the service."

In Jan/Feb of 1955 **Evangelist Bill Smith** returned for another series of meetings at our church.

"The meeting at Covington, Ohio, First Brethren Church ended February 6. As the services closed, I couldn't help but go back to the prayer room and thank God for a real revival.

Twelve precious souls publicly confessed Christ as Saviour, nine rededications were forthcoming, and two young people gave themselves for full-time service. However, this is only part of what was done during this campaign — God alone knows the future of this group. — **Bill Smith, evangelist**.

We praise the Lord for opening the windows of heaven and for pouring out a blessing on us here at Covington. Brother Smith worked hard for two weeks with us. He preached the Word faithfully, and his prayer life is consistent. He proved to be an effective calling partner.

A father, mother, and three children (young people) were baptized and have applied for membership in the church. We are most happy to add that the revival did not end with our Brother "Bill's" departure. — **James Young, pastor, First Brethren Church**.

That Revival Service probably made hearts ready for what the church was about to go through. A real difficult trial lay ahead in the death of one of their rising young people training for ministry at Grace College as reported in a series of articles in the May 1955 **Herald**.

"COVINGTON. OHIO. Ralph Spillers, a student in Grace College, was killed Apr. 9 in his private plane which crashed and burned near here on the farm of his brother. The victim was burned beyond recognition. He was doing solo flying essential to the obtaining of a pilot's license. His pastor, James Young, of the First Brethren Church, was in charge of the funeral on Apr. 12. He is survived by his wife and two children." (Delores Wise Spillers and Ellen and Sharon).


Ralph Spillers

As a result of this tragedy, Pastor Young once again shared at the High School.

"COVINGTON, OHIO. Rev. James O. Young, of the First Brethren Church, presented the Gospel to more than 300 young people in the Covington High School." **BMH May 1955**

A July 1955 article in the **Herald** gave some more details of the accident.



“The air was cool over the Warsaw Municipal Airport on April 9 as Collegiate Junior Ralph Spillers spun the prop of his green Taylorcraft, climbed into the cockpit, and soared into the rising sun.

Below him sped his young wife, Delores, and two daughters, Ellen and Sharon. They arrived by car at hometown Covington, Ohio, ahead of the airplane that was giving Spillers valuable cross-country flying time against the day when he would use it in evangelism. His family kissed hello to kinfolks for the joys of the Easter season.

By mid-morn, the flutter of a small motor in the sky announced Spillers' arrival, and a brother plowing in a nearby farm waved to him as he dipped low, circled, and dipped again. In an attempt to gain altitude, the pilot was too low to fight a downdraft, and crashed, burned, and died.

Sobered by the tragedy, fellow schoolmates dug down into their pockets and sent Delores $263 via Student Body Prexy Nathan Meyer and the Student News reporter to express Christian concern and to say they prayed.

"I could tell that you prayed," said the widow, whose magnificent testimony during funeral and homecoming bore witness to her peace with God. "I know Ralph is much better off with the Lord. If I didn't believe this, I'd have nothing to cling to."

Meyer and the reporter put on their hats and left, thanking God for supplying strength to one of His own when this world's pleasures dissolve.” **BMH July 2 1955**



In the fall of 1955, during the harvest time, Covington First Brethren hosted an evangelist from Michigan by the name of Thunderbird for a week of meetings. Pastor Young and the evangelist went out to the Wise farm almost every afternoon during the week to help Ferman Wise with his tobacco harvest. At the end of the week, an unexpected, yet highly prayed for soul was harvested for the Lord as Ferman went forward with tears streaming down his and everyone else’s face, and gave his life to Jesus.

In January of 1956 the church celebrated a mortgage burning service, as they paid off the original building they had now been meeting in for 10 years. Attendance at all services had so increased that the congregation was considering adding on a SS annex, or even building an entire new church.

Later on, in July of 1956, Pastor James Young resigned.

5. Pastor True Hunt 1956 - 1960



By November of that year, the Rev. True Hunt had assumed his duties as our next pastor. He jumped right in and by the next spring, plans for a ground breaking service on March 31st, for the addition of a 58 X 61 foot Sunday School annex. In the basement there will be a multipurpose room which can be divided for classrooms, and the upper section will provide 12 classrooms and an office for the pastor.

The following announcement appeared in the December 1957 Herald.
“COVINGTON, OHIO. The annual Thanksgiving supper was held Nov. 27 at the First Brethren Church and the membership presented Pastor and Mrs. True Hunt a love gift of canned foods, fruits and cash. The Covington church is in a $40,000-building program. The new unit will house the Sunday school, and also provide



March 31, 1957

Ground breaking for SS Annex addition at the Pearl and Spring St. location. This gave the 11 year old church much needed classroom space for the children, an office for the pastor and bringing indoor restrooms for everybody.

restrooms, pastor's study and a fellowship hall. Full details concerning date of dedication will be announced later."

The new addition, giving the church their first indoor restrooms, was completed by the spring of 1958. The additional space allowed them to celebrate a new Attendance Record of 231 in Sunday School on Easter Sunday.

A couple of interesting articles from the Feb 1959 Herald. The first tells about a two-month attendance contest between the Troy GBC and First Brethren of Covington. According to the Herald, "both pastors, Herman Hein and True Hunt, are already 'fighting' to win."



We were also the host of a district youth rally, which took advantage of our new facilities. Here is the second article in the Feb 1959 Herald about this event: **COVINGTON, OHIO.** The First Brethren Church, True Hunt, pastor, was the scene of the overnight youth rally of the Southern Ohio District Feb. 13-14. The rally was climaxed with a banquet where 148 were served. The guest speaker was Rev. John Wheeler, director of Greater Dayton Area Youth for Christ. The Grace Brethren Community Church of West Alexandria, C. A. Flowers, pastor, won the attendance award on a per-capita mileage basis. Young people from the Grace Brethren Church of Dayton, Randall Maycumber, pastor, won the quiz contest, and the winning team is pictured upper right. The lower picture was taken at the banquet and at the speaker's table (left to right) are: Rev. True Hunt, Kenneth Peters, Rev. Richard Jackson, Rev. John Wheeler (speaker). Miss Evelyn Fuqua





(honored guest), and Edward Jackson of the Covington church, who was in charge of the rally. Seventy-nine were housed overnight, in which project the Troy (Ohio) church assisted.

The April 1959 Herald then announced the winners of the Troy vs Covington attendance contest.

TROY, OHIO. New Sunday school records were achieved at the Grace Brethren Church on Easter Sunday when there were 176 in attendance. The previous record was 142. Herman Hein, Jr., is pastor. In the Sunday-school contest with the First Brethren Church at Covington, Ohio, the Troy Sunday school was the loser and gave the Covington Sunday-school a party as an award. The Covington increase, True Hunt pastor, was 17 percent, and the Troy increase 14 percent.

While only the attendance figures for Troy were given, if you take the attendance record from April 1958 of 231and increase it by the winning percentage of 17% for Covington here in 1959, the resulting figure would be 270. The Herald story does not tell us the Covington numbers so all we can do is speculate.

The June 1960 Herald then included this announcement.

COVINGTON, OHIO Rev. True Hunt, pastor of the First Brethren Church here, has resigned. Mr. Hunt has accepted the call to become the pastor of the First Brethren Church of Uniontown, Pa. He will assume his new duties about Sept. 1.

Ed Jackson 1954-1961



We have to stop here from focusing on our pastors and instead turn our focus on one of our most famous layman who passed through our church here in Covington, on his way to impact literally the whole world for Christ and greatly expand the ministry of the Grace Brethren Fellowship at home and abroad. He served here under both Pastor James Young, Pastor True Hunt and left in the early years of Pastor William Gray. While not a pastor here, after he left us, he would go on to become an ordained pastor in the FGBC.

While stationed at the Piqua Post of the Ohio State Highway Patrol he attended first the Troy Grace Brethren Church where he was baptized by triune immersion in the basement baptistry by Herman Hein. He would then move to Covington around 1954 when he would serve in many different offices including moderator and youth leader. While here he influenced at least two of our members (Jim Hoblet & Roger Landis to join him at the OSP. (A little birdie with the nickname of Butch, let it slip, that he too was influenced to be a Trooper but couldn't get his weight up to meet the 165 lb. requirement). He would leave Covington when he was transferred to the State Headquarters of the Patrol in 1961. According to his autobiography "Faith Stranger than Fiction" it was while here at Covington he first heard the still small voice of God calling him into full time ministry. It was still a few years after his time here, before he would respond to the call and head to Kenai Alaska in 1974 to serve the very new Grace Brethren congregation there. Here is a copy of an article about his life and ministry as published in the March/April 2005 edition of the FGBC World Newspaper that replaced the Brethren Missionary Herald:

The fervor in his eyes belies his age as he speaks. "Faith is just a word until you practice it," he says. "You just have to go."

Pastor Ed Jackson has learned many lessons over his remarkable 79 years. For him the most important one, though, is the most basic element of a Christian's life - faith. In fact, he describes his life journey as evidence of a "faith stranger than fiction."

Jackson was born October 10, 1925, in Lodi, OH, a farm town in Medina County. His life as a child, he says, was anything but pleasant. But in 1933 things changed as Jackson and his family accepted Christ as their Savior. That was the beginning of an amazing life for him.

At age 17, Jackson joined the Marines. Stationed on the USS L. Scott, he helped transport soldiers to battle areas around the world. Here he got some of his first opportunities to stand up for his faith in Christ by leading prayer meetings with fellow Marines.

Jackson married Polly Shock on January 29, 1945, while his ship was in dry dock Less than a month later, he headed back out to sea, and remained with the Marines until being discharged on April 7, 1946. God then led him to a career in the Ohio State Highway Patrol. "There was no question in my mind that the Lord had called me to be a trooper," he says.

The years that followed proved to be some of the most stretching and important years of Jackson's life. He says his time m the Patrol taught him the importance of prayer. In addition, he adopted Matthew 6:33 ("But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.") as his life verse as a trooper. While Jackson was a trooper, Polly gave birth to two children. Jill was born in 1950, and Jim in 1954.

During his service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol, Jackson was a patrol officer (reaching the rank of Lieutenant), a teacher at the Academy, a plainclothes officer, and chaplain at the Southern Police Institute at the University of Louisville in Kentucky. He also helped develop a system of determining leadership potential in troopers. He still uses this material today in his leadership training sessions in the church. He retired from the Patrol on September 19, 1970.

Jackson served as president of the National Laymen's Organization of the FGBC in 1967. He was on the Christian Education Board, and was involved In GBNAM's home missions program from 1967-1974. Jackson founded the Grace Brethren Men and Grace Brethren Boys organizations in 1970 and 1972, respectively.

In July 1974, Jackson was licensed as a Grace Brethren pastor. He planted churches in Kenai, Alaska (1974-1979); Orlando, Florida (1979- 1981); Homer, Alaska (1981-1983); North Pole, Alaska (1983-1984); and. pastored in Findlay, Ohio (1984-1985). Jackson credits the Lord with the success he and Polly had while planting churches. “We’ve always been blessed. Struggles were minimal,” he says. “The most difficult thing in church planting is the leaving.” While planting churches, Jackson developed what is now known as the Yokefellow Ministry, in which church members skilled in construction assist a new church or organization in raising their building, Jackson was director of church planting and development with Grace Brethren Home Missions from 1985-1990; executive director of Grace Brethren Men International, Inc. from 1990-1997; elder-overseer of missions with the Grace Brethren Church of Columbus, OH, from 1990-1999; and interim pastor of Pataskala Grace Brethren Church from 1996-1997. He currently serves on the pastoral staff of the Powell, OH, Grace Brethren Church. “I wear the missions hat,” he says. Jackson coordinates the church’s building program.

Jackson has learned several key principles for maintaining a thriving Christian life. First, he stresses the importance of prayer. “Intercessory prayer is a vital part of life,” he comments. Jackson encourages believers to make prayer a habit. He says to pray for alertness to spiritual ‘encounters so they won't be missed.

In addition, Jackson feels that submission to God is crucial. “[The key is] obedience, irrespective of the circumstances,” he says. Even when hard times come, he stresses, we should. obey. “We cope with adversity because the Lord is our strength.”

Finally; Jackson encourages churches to use people where they are gifted, citing Ephesians 4:12.

Jackson emphasizes that he is not “super spiritual.” “We're just ordinary people, but we serve an extraordinary God,” he says.

Pastor Ed went to be with his Lord in 2018 at the age of 92.

6. Pastor William Gray 1960 – 1965



Pastor Gray began his ministry with us in August of 1960 according to the July 1960 issue of the Herald. Sometime during the end of Pastor True Hunt’s ministry and the early years of Pastor Gray’s, our church suffered it’s greatest attack of Satan when a large portion of our members and attenders were persuaded to follow after “The Way International,” a nontrinitarian “Christian” tongues speaking cult located in New Knoxville, Ohio.

It was during this event or soon after that Pastor Gray suffered a heart attack in May of 1964. Even after a month of recovery he still expressed doubt that he was going to be able to return to ministry. A year later, he tendered his resignation to the church effective in April of 1965.

7. Pastor Ralph Miller 1966—1971

A year later the Herald announced: **COVINGTON, OHIO**. The First Brethren Church of Covington has extended a unanimous call to Rev. and Mrs. Ralph (Nancy) Miller; they are to begin their ministry' here the last of March.

The first item of news that was sent into the Herald from Pastor Miller was this:

GRAY, Rev. William, 67, former pastor of the First Brethren Church, Covington, Ohio, went to be with the Lord on Dec. 13. He had retired from the Brethren pastorate in 1964 because of illness. Services were held both in Covington, Ohio, and in Masontown, Pa., where he was laid to rest on Dec. 16. Submitted by Rev. Ralph Miller.

Pastor Miller went back to what had been the tried and true method of that time of reaching the community through a series of evangelistic meetings. The listed attendance figures for the meetings graphically showed the effects the defection to “the Way” under Gray had caused. But in spite of the reduced numbers, God still worked and people were added to the kingdom of God.

COVINGTON, OHIO. In a recent evangelistic meeting with Rev. George Long at the First Brethren Church, there were ten decisions and an average attendance of 86. Five were baptized at the close of the meeting. Pastor Ralph Miller reports that they have seen some real victories in the past few months, for which they are praising the Lord. Herald—Jan 1969

COVINGTON, OHIO. During recent meetings with Allen Herr, there were 13 decisions to receive Christ as Saviour, 14 rededications, and one for assurance. After pre-service prayer one night, Pastor Ralph Miller led an 11 year-old boy to the Lord. That same night, six more accepted Christ in the service. Herald—May 1969

Like most of our previous pastors, this was Pastor Miller’s first church. He would go on from here to serve churches in Iowa, West Virginia, and Virginia. His last pastorate was at Boones Mill Grace Brethren Church just south of Roanoke, Virginia.

He was ordained by our congregation.

COVINGTON, OHIO. Rev. Ralph F. Miller, pastor of the First Brethren Church, was ordained to the Christian ministry at a Sunday afternoon service on Sept. 14, at the Covington church. Mr. Miller graduated from Grace Seminary in 1965 and also became a member of The Brethren Church. He was licensed to the ministry

in the Iowa district, and became pastor at Covington in 1966. The message for the service. "Responsibility—His and Yours," was brought by Rev. Jesse Deloe. pastor of the North Riverdale Brethren Church, Dayton, Ohio. Pastor Miller is serving this year as vice chairman of the Southern Ohio District Fellowship of Brethren Ministers. Herald—Nov 1969

While here, he not only added to the church family, he also added to his own family.

COVINGTON, OHIO. Lori Ann became the adopted daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Ralph Miller on Apr. 20. She was born Apr. 14 in Columbus, Ohio. Lori is the first grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon W. Schrock of the Grace Brethren Church, Waterloo, Iowa. Five people were added to the church membership through baptism Apr. 26. Janice Berryhill, a foster daughter who became part of Pastor and Mrs. Miller's family in October 1968 and received Christ on Thanksgiving Day of that year, was among the five. Herald—May 1970

COVINGTON, OHIO. Twelve new people have been added to the active membership in the past three months. On June 28, six were baptized by trine immersion and added to the membership. Ralph F. Miller, pastor. Herald—Aug 1970

The next year we see this announced in the Herald. **Ralph F. Miller** has resigned as pastor of the First Brethren Church effective July 14. His future plans are indefinite. Herald—May 1971

8. Gerald Root 1971 – 1976



The September 1971 Herald announce the calling of our 8th pastor with this posting: **Rev. Gerald Root**, First Brethren Church, Spring at Pearl St., Covington, Ohio 45318. Please change Annual.

Just a couple months later we would celebrate the additions on Pearl Street being fully paid off by inviting the pastor that started that addition, **True Hunt**, back for a week of meetings.

Covington, Ohio. A mortgage-burning service held Sept. 12, began a series of highlight events during the Autumn months for the First Brethren Church. The mortgage-burning service was planned back in 1957 when $40,000 worth of bonds were sold for church expansion. The speaker for the service was Mr. Ed Jackson, former member of the church and now executive secretary of the National Fellowship of Grace Brethren Men. During the following week, services were held with Rev. True Hunt, pastor of the church in 1957 when the expansion program was begun. During the fall months Rev. Gerald Root began as the pastor and a new evangelistic thrust was started in the community. Herald—Nov 71

Winona Lake, Ind Evangelist Bill Smith reports a great crusade meeting at Covington, Ohio, May 4-9. There were 24 public decisions for Christ. Gerald Root, pastor. Herald—July 75

We evidently ended the year celebrating with our sister church in Troy.

Troy Ohio A delightful time of fellowship was enjoyed when the Covington (Ohio) Brethren joined the Troy Brethren at a combined service on New Year's Eve. Pictures of the Norman Johnsons (new missionaries to Brazil) were shown, followed by the showing of the film, "The Rapture." - Herald

Pastor Root would resign his ministry here in Covington sometime in 1976 with Randy Maycomber taking up the reins in October when he moved from Dayton to 10 S. Pearl St., Covington, Ohio.

9. Randy Maycomber 1976 – 1983



Love him or hate him, our 9th pastor was at the helm when our ship sailed out of Covington proper and landed in the middle of a corn field, 2 1/2 miles outside of town. After 30 years, the church had enlarged it's building as far as their land allowed. With parking now being the major roadblock to further growth, efforts were made to work with the town of Covington to allow additional property to the north of the church to be purchased and torn down to put in a much needed parking lot. Eventually it was decided to make the move out of town and build a brand new facility from the ground up. The building that had been used as a church for over 140 years would be sold to the village and would become a public library with the two houses to the north, torn down to make room for the needed parking lot. The ground breaking for the new church took place in 1980.













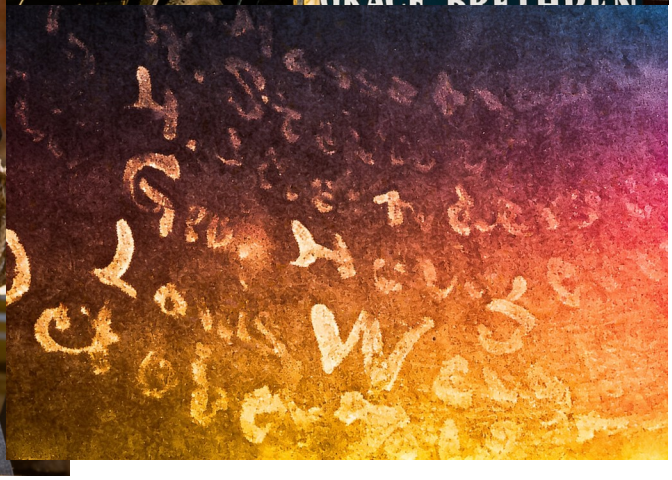
The Bell Forged in 1873



By the Buckeye Bell Foundry In Cincinnati Makes the move with us

Signatures of original installers of the Bell on the original building back on October 7, 1873 are still visible on the inside of the Bell.





After 3 long years the building was finally ready. This article in the Troy Daily News on January 24, 1982, announced our grand opening at 5850 W State Route 41.

COVINGTON - How many ministers can say they built their own church? That's exactly what the Rev. Randy Maycumber did. The result of his effort, the Friendship Brethren Church, is to be dedicated at services next Sunday morning during the worship service at 10:45 a.m. with an open house following that afternoon from 2 to 6 p.m.

While Maycumber spent more than 5,000 hours on the project sawing, hammering, cementing, doing anything there was to do, he was quick to give credit to others who shared the labor. Kenneth Kimmel did the plumbing; Wayne Wise and Robert Hofacker the electrical wiring; Dean Via, the buying and delivering of much of the material: Bill Supinger, the masonry.

Special credit, he said, was due Russell and Lela Hoblit who provided more meals for the workers than he could count, many without advance notice. Maycumber also talked about the patience of his congregation, who had to move out of the old church once it was sold to become the new library, and attend services in the high school multi-purpose room for a year.

The building, 2 1/2 miles east of Covington on State Route 41, is not the only new thing about the church: the name is also new, the word "friendship" having been added.

"Friendship was once the name of the town now called Covington," Maycumber said ... But it was chosen also because our church is caring. We want to help people not just spiritually but emotionally and physically as well."



"You can preach to men with empty stomachs but they don't listen well" was a saying Maycumber heard in his training. He said he found it to be true during the period he spent in Brazil.

"We always took food along to feed the families in the Amazon area. It's easier to talk to people after supper instead of before," he explained.

A mural of trees, misty sky and colorful blossoms looks out from a wall of Maycumber's office in the new church. It was selected because it reminded him of the Amazon jungle, a memory he seems to treasure. However, he has spent time in pastorates in Florida and in Dayton in addition to those in Brazil. What is more, he built churches in both those locations. Contractors did the exterior work on the first one he tackled in 1959 in Dayton. Ten years later he said he did 80 percent of the building of a church in Florida. It was after another 10 years, in October 1979, that he started work on the Covington church. "It's taken a lot longer than I expected it to," the pastor said. But he has incorporated features with an eye to the future and still managed to keep a close hand on the purse strings. In this economy that's not an easy task, he found. The rooms of the church including the chapel, Sunday school rooms, kitchen, nursery and offices surround a large multi-purpose room entered from the front doors. Maycumber hopes to make good use of this room, especially for youth activities. Opening to the north of this room is the chapel, striking in its simplicity. A beige and brown tweedy carpet is topped by brightly colored pews upholstered in beige crushed velvet. Low stone dividers separate the pews from the altar which is elevated two low steps. The same stone is used at corners of the altar wall and light shines through two long narrow windows at either side of the pulpit. The walls and backs of the pews are painted bright coral and the same color scheme is carried out in the Sunday school rooms. Virginia Peters, Evelyn Maycumber and Irene French did the interior decorating. Maycumber explained the pews from the other church were taken apart and reassembled and upholstered.

The lumber left from them was used as part of the woodwork in church. Don Angle helped with pew project. The church sits on five acres of ground so Maycumber says there will be plenty of space for outside activities. He is interested in young people and says one can get to know them better by keeping them active and being with them.

We are anxious to help those who don't always have the opportunity to participate in sports. Our facility will be open to children who aren't members of our congregation. We are willing to let groups use it too, although we may have to charge them the cost of the utilities," pastor said.

The congregation is looking forward to the open house next Sunday afternoon and invites all interested people in the community to com« the church their pastor built.



Membership lists are living breathing documents that get added to as new members come in and subtracted from as members leave or go home to be the Lord. We do, however, have a list of members from the move in 1983.

Membership List Friendship Grace Brethren Church 1983

Adams, Candace
Bass Brian & Rebecca
Cain, Jeff
Cain Vickie•
Cozatt, Ora & Connie
Dershem, Fay & April
DeVaudrevil, Chris & Lala
Draving, Richard & Barbara
Garber, Maggie
Hoblit, Duane, Dorothy, Hendy, & Rita
Hoblit, James, Carolyn·, & Pam
Hoblit, Russell & Lala
Hofacker, Robert &. Charlotte
Kimmel, Kenneth, Dixie, Randall, Ryan, Ray
Kimmel Rusty
Laughman, Jessie
Lavy, Roy, Elizabeth, & Murray
Parker, Buddy & Mary
Peters, Kraig & Mary Ell
Peters, Kenneth & Virginia
Staudt, Mildred
Strait, Lester & Beulah
Suplinger, Bill & Peggy
Tinkham, Deborah
Williams Kim
Wise, Edward & Nancy
Wise, Thelma
Wise, Wayne & Dorma

10. Don Staley 1984 - 1995



At 12 years, Don Staley was our longest serving pastor and actually retired to end his time with us in 1995. We do not have anything from the Herald that tells us of his time here. Our current pastor, Roy Glass, III was youth pastor at the Troy church in 84 when Pastor Staley hosted a Youth Rally at Covington. Pastor Staley had everyone stand back as he threw a torch at a pile of brush that was going to be burned for the evening bonfire which he had soaked with gasoline earlier in the day. The resulting flash made quite an impression on Roy, along with singed eye brows, he learned a valuable lesson on how not to start a fire. It would be a lesson he would take with him when he would become director of the Blue Ridge District's Camp Tuk-A-Way in 2009.

We do have this from the Herald in March of 84

Don Staley has accepted the pastorate of the Friendship Grace Brethren Church in Covington, OH. His address is 139 N. Wall Street, Covington, OH 45318

In his12 years of ministry here, the only other entry was this:

Friendship Grace Brethren Church of Covington, OH is accepting resumes for pastoral candidates. Send resumes to: Mr. Robert Holfacker 4782 Fletcher Road Covington, OH 45318
Staley Retires July 1995



Evidently one of his first actions was installing a lighted cross on the front of the church. The Troy Daily News announced the occasion with a picture and a note: NIGHT LIGHT—The cross, recently erected on the front of Friendship Grace Brethren Church, 5850 W. S.R. 41, Covington , lights up the night to passing motorists, serving as a beacon of God's Word, a reminder of Christ's sacrifice so that all may live and an invitation to attend services at the church. New pastor is the Rev. Donald Staley, 139 N. Wall St., Covington.

Sometime between when this picture was taken and the next pastor the name of the church was changed to Friendship Community Church. We have an old, undated constitution that changes the name of the church from Friendship Grace Brethren Church to Friendship Community Church. It is assumed that this change was made sometime during the 12 years of Pastor Staleys's leadership, because the next three pastors would refer to the church as Friendship Community until a new sign was added under Pastor Tim Combs in 2016 with a return to the Friendship Grace Brethren name. It is also about this time that our AWANA ministry was began.

We do have this from the Charis Connect web site from December of 2014

Word has been received of the August 2014 death of Don Staley, former pastor of Friendship Grace Brethren Church, Covington, Ohio. Services were held August 13 in Worthington, Ohio, interment at the Cheshire Cemetery, 3271 Cheshire Rd. Delaware, Ohio. His obituary appears below.

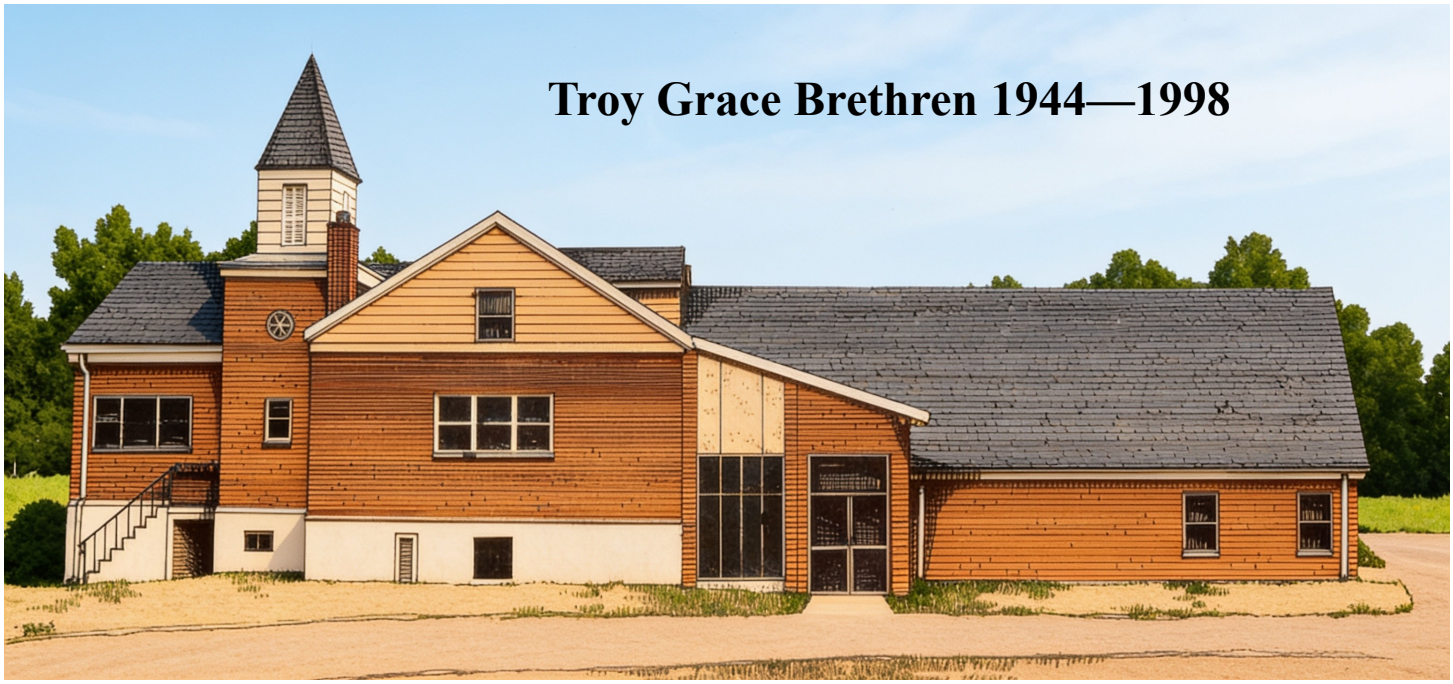
COVINGTON - Pastor Donald Eugene Staley, from Covington, ended his battle with cancer on August 9, 2014, and is joyfully with The Lord. He was 83. Don is survived by his loving wife Sandy, their four children; Mike Staley (Cathy), Mark Staley (Nancy), Matt Staley (Marcy), and Dawn Polsdorfer (Wesley) and his sister Judy Staley. The family will receive friends at 1 p.m. today followed by the funeral service at 2 p.m. at Schoedinger Worthington Chapel, 6699 North High St., Worthington, Ohio 43085. Interment to follow at the Cheshire Cemetery, 3271 Cheshire Rd. Delaware, OH. 43015.

11. Larry Richeson 1995 – 2000



Pastor Larry did oversee a major change in our church as he worked with Pastor Urban Lewis of the Troy GBC to join their dwindling congregation with ours. With the proceeds from the sale of the Troy church property to the next door Baird Funeral Home, the merge helped the Friendship church pay off their bond debt and gave us some savings that would help us face the future.

With the merge, Troy GBC's history became a part of our history, so we will pause here to take a short look at their history before they became us.



The Grace Brethren Church of Troy began in the fall of 1944. Brethren Arthur Carey and Norman Uphouse, along with the Rev. Arthur Cashman, made a survey of the Culbertson Heights area of Troy. They found a suitable building on North Market Street (Staunton Township House), and was granted permission to use it rent free for as long as it was needed. This was just north of the Great Miami River and north of the public square.

The first service was held there on October 15, 1944. Following this beginning Mr. Carey went back to Pennsylvania where he was serving as pastor. Brother Uphouse continued to conduct a Sunday School in the afternoon during the following winter, bringing some of the people from North Riverdale, where he was the pastor, to help. In the spring of 1945, Brother Carey resigned from his pastorate and came to Troy to serve as pastor. For the first two years he was also Pastor of the Clayton Church.

The Central District of the Brethren Churches provided help in many ways. The District Mission Board paid part of the pastor's salary, then later gave to the building fund. Other individuals and groups helped financial-



ly and with labor. Lots were bought in 1946 at 527 North Market Street next to the Rose Hill Cemetery. In 1948 a used building was purchased and an attempt was made to move it to the lots; but the building fell apart just as it neared the location. After this, friends gave a substantial offering, and work was begun on a basement structure to be used until the build would be completed.

This was done in 1949, and meetings were held during the summer, even though doors and windows could not be immediately installed.

Brother Carey remained as pastor until 1952. During this time he held a steady job, as the church was not able to pay his salary. At the same time, he was doing much of the work of building the church. Many people helped, however, among them the young people, who worked long and hard.
The charter Members were as follows:

June Crommes	Bessie Fox
Betty North Pierce	Bessie Bledsoe
Marilyn Mills	Mark Kindell
Donna Kingery	Helen Turner Hawkins
Mary Bledsoe Couchat	Shirley Kindell
Delores Fox	Joan Wilkinds
Mary Alice Robbins	Herchel Vogann
Arthur Carey	Ross Carey
Leah Carey	Mary Vogann
Donald Carey	Rose M.B. Martin
Brant Carey	Ronald Wilson
Williams Kindell	Wilma Hartley
Patricia Fox	Cary Cruikshank
Patricia Kindell	Ruby Collins
Blanche Garber	Mildred Richards
Emma King	Barbara B. McIntosh

The church called the Rev. Richard McIntosh following his graduation from Bryan University in June, 1952. Under his ministry the congregation made some progress despite the fact that he also had to take employment to support his family. Brother Carey stayed another year after his resignation and continued to help in the building of the church. The super-



structure was completed in 1952, but the services continued to be held in the basement. The cornerstone was laid September 7, 1952.


1948 Sunday-school picnic

In 1954 , the church called the Rev. Francis Brill as pastor. He remained one year. During that time plans were made to complete the building, but due to lack of funds no progress was made Pastor Brill left on September 1 , 1954.

For several months various men filed the pulpit , among them were Donald Tolbert and Clarence Curley . The Home Missions Council was asked to help. A contract was signed with them in February, 1956. Milton Ryerson, seminarian, came to preach on weekends, but was unable to make the trip from Winona Lake each week. He resigned in September 1956.

The Rev. Herman Hein came to the field next, October, 1956. The Home Missions Council made plans for completing the church. Two acres of land behind the church were purchased and dedicated on May 18, 1958. Under the dedicated ministry of Pastor Hein, the church began to flourish. He saw a prosperous spiritual enlargement also, and remained as an effective leader until July 1 , 1964, when he resigned to go to Kokomo Indiana. The church became self-supporting while he was pastor.

Pastor John Neely assumed charge of the work of the ministry on Hein 's leaving. He served until 1967.

Deacons and deaconesses have been Don and Luci le Tolbert, Roger and Mary Wackier, Robert and Tonda Tolbert, and Jim and Nancy Hampton; The church has helped in supporting missionaries Arthur Carey and family, Jim arid Nancy Nesbitt, Duke and Judy Wallace, Walter Haag and family, Dan and Nancy Green and Bob Poirier.

Mr. LeClaire McCurdy pastored part of one year in 1969. Michael Volovski came and pastored the flock until 1972, when he decided to relinquish the pastorate; The same year the Rev. Raymond Johnson came and remained until the summer of 1979.

During the church's history, it hosted District Conference in 1961 . Sunday School super superintendents have included among others Ben Carey, Richard Brush, Robert McBride , Patricia Fox , June Cromme, Bill Kinden , Louis Westfall, Phil Westfall, Don Tolbert , Robert Tolbert , Ed Baker, Dan Tolbert , Jim Bowling, Jim Hampton , Dick Booker, and Ned Denlinger.

Special evangelists or Bible teachers have been (in part) Leo Polman (tent meeting), R. Paul Miller (tent), Dr; Herman Hoyt, Dr. John Whitcomb, Joe Dombeck, Jack Peters, Bill Smith, Dr. Russell Barnard, and Ed Lewis, Sr

Vice—moderators have included William King, Pat King, Robert McBride, and Don Tobert.
Rev. Roy E. Glass, Jr. accepted the call to pastor the church in August of 1979. Plans were made for enlarging the building in the spring of 1983. Our ground breaking service was held on Palm Sunday, March 27, 1983 and was finished by the 3rd of July. August 18, 1987 after eight years Roy E. Glass resigned as pastor. Dec 1, 1987 the board recommended that we call Pastor Roy Glass Ill to be our pastor. Roy Glass accepted the call. After four years Roy Glass Ill resigned as pastor on November 31 , 1991. Because of being $3,000.00 behind in building payments we could not afford a full time pastor.
The church called Pastor Clair Brickel to be our interim pastor on May 24, 1992 . They then called him to be our full time pastor, at this point the church once again became debt free

Pastor Urban Lewis followed Pastor Brickel and he helped merge Troy with Covington in 1998.



1998 FRIENDSHIP AND TROY UNDER ONE ROOF

Pastor Larry Richeson would conclude 5 years of ministry with us at the beginning of 2000.

12. G. Forrest Jackson 2000 – 2010



With the turn of the century, the church began a new era with a very familiar face.

G. Forrest Jackson had been the pastor of the First Grace Brethren Church of Dayton for 38 years, since the early sixties. He had just recently retired from there, but was not ready to retire from ministry. He answered the call when he learned of our need of a pastor here at Friendship.

He began by looking at ways we could upgrade our building and land for ministry. First order of business was a ground breaking service for a Pavillion.



By the time the projects were all over, the restrooms would be enlarged and improved, the Sanctuary would get a new look as well as a face lift to the front of the church with landscaping and other improvements.

So many improvements that by the time they were all done in 2001, we celebrated with a Dedication service. We invited a number of our old pastors and friends to join us in the celebration.



Our guest speaker for the day would be Pastor Ed Jackson, our former youth leader, moderator, Sunday school superintendent and all round good cop.



















Forrest would once again retire from ministry in 2010, this time for good. He would return to sit in the pew at First Brethren of Dayton, now under the leadership of his son, Bruce Jackson. Soon after that the beginning stages of Alzheimer's would make itself known and Forrest would become a resident of the Grace Brethren Village, the Tri-State Grace Brethren Retirement community that he was instrumental in starting in 1971. From there he would enter into the presence of Jesus on May 25, 2016.

His ministry of over 54 years were highlighted in his obituary.

He graduated from Grace Theological Seminary ('57) and served as a Grace Brethren pastor in Dallas Center, Iowa (six years), First Grace Brethren in Dayton, Ohio (38 years), and Friendship Community Church in Covington, Ohio (10 years). In addition, he served on the boards of CE National, Grace College and Theological Seminary, and the Association of Grace Brethren Ministers (who selected him as "Pastor of the Year" in 1987). Also, he led multi-denomination, cooperative citywide evangelistic efforts with notable Christian leaders like Ford Philpot, Jack Van Impe, James Robison and Franklin Graham. He was an active part of both the Vandalia, Ohio and West Milton, Ohio, Rotary Chapters. He was also a devoted member of First Grace Brethren Church (where his son, Bruce, now pastors) and attended every week at the church building that he gave leadership to build in 1987 on Stonequarry Road.

Tribute by his Son, Dave Jackson:

"Today the NBA lost one of its unrestricted free agents when my dad G. Forrest Jackson slipped quietly into the presence of the Lord he loved and served. It was 1954 and my dad was faced with an incredible choice of following a dream of an NBA career with the Pistons or going to Grace Seminary and becoming a pastor. He turned his back on the NBA and began a life of sacrifice and service.

Growing up in his home I always felt his love and concern for me. He was always my greatest fan. As a role model I watched him serve and sacrifice for others. But I always knew that his family was his greatest priority. For over 60 years he encouraged his family and his congregations. The way my parents loved each other and their family have made me who I am today.

What incredible role models. The NBA doesn't even know that he is gone, but the courts of heaven are rejoicing today as they receive a "good and faithful" servant, and unnumbered others still living have had their lives changed because of my dad's role in their lives. I will miss him but he lives on through me and we will be reunited in a future day around the throne of heaven."

It was under Pastor Jackson that Evangelist Mike Wingfield first began having Prophecy Conferences here.

13. Eugene Oburn 2011 - 2013



Pastor Gene Oburn came in 2011. He was actually a local boy born and raised. He graduated from Newton High School in 1959. He was from the branch of the Brethren which we broke off from, before we joined with the Grace Brethren at our official start. He was a graduate of Ashland College and Seminary. I will leave it up to those of you who lived through this time period to decide who's fault was the turmoil he experienced as our pastor. His annual pastor reports are hard to read. He started out as a part time pastor and by the time he was finally excepted as full time, his service was terminated.

We do have a VHS tape of his 2013 Easter Celebration Service here a Friendship Grace. The choir sang and lead worship and the children had a lovely program as well. Pastor Roy converted that tape to digital and it is available for viewing on our Youtube channel.

14. Tim Combs May 2014 - 2018



With the arrival of Pastor Tim came a new sense of a need for community outreach and more visibility from the highway.

The more visibility was accomplished with a brand new sign and logo.



One of those ministries that started under him was our monthly Community Dinners.. The monthly menu for 2016 was included in the annual report.

January
Soup—3 kinds
Peanut Butter Sandwiches
Crackers
Poke Cakes and Brownies

February
Lasagna
Baked Spaghetti
Salad
Garlic Bread
Cheesecake and cookies

March
Beef Stew
Sauerkraut Sausage and Potatoes
Fruit Cocktail
Bread
Cake and Cookies

April
Biscuits and Gravy
Scrambled Eggs
Bacon and Sausage
Fruit

May
Beef and Noodles
Mashed Potatoes
Green Beans
Cake and Brownies

June
Hamburgers and Hot Dogs
Baked Beans
Macaroni Salad
Fruit and cookies

July
Smoked Pork
Mac and cheese
Vegetable tray
Texas sheet cake

August
Spaghetti
Salad
Bread
Cake

September
Hamburgers and Hot Dogs
Mac and Cheese
Green Beans
Cookies

October
Chicken and Noodles
Mashed Potatoes
Corn
Pumpkin Roll and brownies

November
Chili
Cheesy Potato Soup
PB Sandwiches
Fruit and Cookies

December
Ham and Turkey
Sweet Potatoes
Mashed Potatoes
Green Beans
Pies

All this for just $1,246.27

It was also under Tim that the Sportmen's Game Dinners were started. And people still comment on the Outdoor Bluegrass Music Fest in May of 2015, featuring Trinity River Band, New Mountain Heritage and the Alley Family. The church also participated in Covington's Annual Christmas Parade.



Pastor Tim resigned in the Fall of 2018.

In the year and half interim period between Pastor Tim's resignation and Pastor Roy coming in the spring of 2020, the pulpit was filled and ministry was lead by Pastor Ralph Schaffma, who had recently retired from the nearby Stillwater Community Church. When a hip replacement surgery sidelined him, Pastor Greg Ryerson, a former Tri-State GBC pastor, stepped in to provide some leadership and fill the pulpit.

15. Roy Glass, III Apr 2020 -



As Covid was shutting down everything, the church extended a call to Pastor Roy Glass, III. They voted on him on the last Sunday that they met before being told to shut down. After fulfilling his final obligations as the director at Camp Tuk-A-Way in Blacksburg VA., he and his family packed up their lives, with the help of Russ Kimmel and Leroy Wise and moved to Covington the first weekend of April. That Monday, Ohio shut down the border to all outsiders. After figuring out how to safely meet, Pastor Roy held church on the next Sunday in the parking lot, with the message and service broadcast over the car radio. That was April 12, Easter Sunday 2020.





Under his leadership we have tried some other outreach events such as Centershot Archery Outreach. With the help of his wife Carol we also tried a Fourth Friday Family Fun night. Neither really took off like we had hoped. We've also added a much needed but still underused children's playground;



We continued the Sportsmen Game Dinners, Community Dinners, Prophecy Meetings with Pastor Mike Wingfield and other ministries started by our predecessors as long as there were volunteers to help run them. With the retirement of Pastor Mike from full time ministry, we have not had any more Prophecy conferences, but we still take advantage of his monthly livestream for Sunday School.

At the beginning of 2026, we entered into a possible merger with Stillwater Community Church, an idea they came to us with. After almost 8 months of movement and work towards making the merger happen, they informed us in September that they were no longer interested in it.

As we enter into our 81st year, we have 52 Members listed on our roll:

Baker, Keisha
Boehringer, Allison
Booker, Kathy
Brumbaugh, Judy
Davis, Becky
Davison, Jan
Drill, Jeanette
Foster, Cheyanne
Foster, Jen
Gibboney, Kathleen
Gibboney, Michael
Glass, Carol
Glass, Roy
Hall, Anne
Hall, Keith
Harlow, Shirley
Hoblit, Carolyn
Isner, Judy
Jenkins, Linda
Kimmel, Dixie
Kimmel, Garrett
Kimmel, Kenneth
Kimmel, Kim
Kimmel, Ray
Kimmel, Rod
Kimmel, Russ
Kimmel, Ryan
Kimmel, Stacey
Kimmel, Tanner
Koble, Lindsey
Pemberton, Amy
Pemberton, Craig
Ramsoner, Don
Ryder, Shirley
Shafer, Mike
Shaner, Debbie
Smith, Charlene
Studebaker, Darlene
Tarr, Dorothy
Tegeler, Steve
Trent, Pam
Walters, Mary
Warner, Danel
Warner, Darryn
Warner, Garrett
Wimmer, Dave
Wise, Ed
Wise, Jenny
Wise, Larry
Wise, Leroy
Wise, Nancy
Wise, Pat



In our 80 years, we have witnessed 29,222 sunrises and sunsets here in Miami County, Ohio. We pray that God will continue to shine His light in and through us for many years to come and that as long as He tarries His coming we will remain steadfast, eagerly watching for and adding to His Kingdom.





The First Family of Covington First Brethren

The Wise Family

Back Row - Bob, John, Edna, Delores, Mary Ellen, Wanetta, Wayne

Front Row - Ed, Fernie, Thelma, Ferman, Larry, Dixie

Just about all 13 of them were members here at one point or another. Bob, Edna and Thelma were the only listed charter members.

Only Ed, Dixie, Fernie and Larry are still alive to help us celebrate our

80th Anniversary.

Fernie lives in Arizona.

Ed, Dixie and Larry are still a part of our Membership


FRIENDSHIP
GRACE BRETHREN CHURCH
Disciples Making Disciples!