

# **ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**



**KINMUNDY CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
Third & Monroe Sts.  
Kinmundy, Illinois 62854

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## INTRODUCTION

This has been a labor of love to prepare a written history of the Kinmundy Christian Church. Having worked with the people of this church, I have grown to love here leaders and her members. With the few years that I had an opportunity to work here, I also grew to appreciate her past.

It is the opinion of this writer that every church should have her history put into print or at least kept in some fashion. When seeking to find more information on the past of the Kinmundy Church, I found most information was in the memories of her members. To sit and glean from their minds was a pleasure. The rest had to come from hours at the newspaper office and libraries.

I consider this to be a first draft of better things to come. As you read this booklet, maybe you will be reminded of little bits and pieces that have been omitted. Let me know of anything you come up with so that the next draft will be more complete.

It is my desire that you will learn from this booklet and grow to love your church more as you learn of her past.

## CHURCHES IN KINMUNDY'S EARLY YEARS

The background and events leading up to any significant happening is vital to its complete understanding. We believe this to be true concerning our presentation here of the history of the Kinmundy Christian Church. Therefore, we present here a brief summary of the various church groups that have existed in or near the city of Kinmundy in years past.

This area was the location chosen for a much needed railway stop in the middle 1800's. A station spot was chosen, and the city was eventually platted and organized in 1857. This new city was named Kinmundy, and is so named because this was the name of the hometown over in Scotland of one of the London representatives of the Illinois Central Railroad.

But before the town was ever established, various denominational churches were being organized in the area. A Cumberland Presbyterian Church was organized in the area on September 7, 1840. The church went by the name of Mt. Carmel but took the name Kinmundy when the town was

founded under that name. The first church building built within the city limits was erected by this group in 1859. Another Presbyterian congregation was started in 1865 but later merged with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. However, in the later 1920's, the Presbyterians became too few in number and the church was disbanded.

In 1858, circuit-riding Methodist preachers were coming to Kinmundy and holding preaching services on numerous occasions. As a result, many were converted to the beliefs of these preachers. Some of the converts became organized as a group in 1863 and formed the Kinmundy Circuit. There was another group called Southern Methodists in Kinmundy (from 1869 to the early 1900's) but they too disbanded. There is still a Methodist congregation meeting here. Their building is located at the corner of Third and Washington Streets.

Baptists were also among the first in the area. In 1866, a Baptist congregation was organized in Kinmundy, but it was dissolved in 1873. Another Baptist church was started in 1904, but it too did not last long. At this writing, there are no Baptist churches located within the city limits, although there is one located several miles from town.

The Roman Catholic Church came to the area as early as 1866 with a traveling priest who was saying mass in the homes of newly located Catholic families. The Catholic Church in Kinmundy was begun in 1870. Although the Church has not become a driving force like it has in so many other communities, it is still in existence today.

There was at one time a Church of God in the community, having been organized in 1925, but it was short-lived. A Pentecostal Church was formed in more recent history and is still active at this time.

At the time of Kinmundy's beginning, the Restoration Movement was becoming a powerful force. Congregations were leaving their denominations as they sought to be simple churches of Christ after the New Testament pattern. Our portion of downstate Illinois was not left out when it came to the promoting of the pure Gospel. Concerned preachers were going through the area establishing churches their plea for a return to the ancient order of things. Although it was started much later than many of our sister churches in the area, the Kinmundy Christian Church was organized with this plea in mind. It is their history that we now tell.

## THE BEGINNING

With many churches and in most cases, the presenting a date of origin may be a simple task. Such has not been the case in the gathering of the material we now present. Records are unavailable that would reveal a date that could be considered the actual founding and organizing time. Conflicting dates have been presented in the past and these we hope to clarify. We have come up with various other sources, and as a result of consulting them, we have come to some conclusions that reveal the probable date or time of organization.

The E.C Bargh family and the Lovell family, with a few other Christians, had held gatherings on an irregular basis beginning in 1886. These earliest meetings took place in their homes and then in the Knights of Pythias Hall. Beginning in about 1894, Billy Ross and his father, known as Uncle Johnny Ross, started conducting services for the group. These two were serving in leadership positions with area churches and were concerned with this new group of Christians meeting in Kinmundy, and therefore offered their assistance. These services usually took place in the

in the afternoon so that those giving assistance to the group could attend with their home congregations. Also named as occasional attendants were R.A. Williams and his wife from the "Young School District." It is this writer's understanding that this refers to the area near Salem where the Young's Chapel Christian Church now meets.

In 1899, two area preachers were secured to hold a Revival Meeting for this group of believers. They were J.H. Smart of Centralia and G. Halleck Rowe of Salem. The local newspaper, the KINMUNDY JOURNAL, advertised the meeting in their August 10, 1899 issue in the following way:

Elder Smart, of Centralia, will hold services at the M.E. Church, South, next Wednesday evening under the auspices of the Christian Church.

Other sources reveal that the meeting lasted for several weeks, and we believe, therefore, well into September.

In the book by N.S. Haynes, History of the Disciples in Illinois, under the entry for Kinmundy, it states that:

Minister J.H. Smart, then with the church in Centralia, was engaged by the mission board of the district to hold a series of meetings and organize a church. This was done in the summer of 1899.

There were a number of decisions made during this meeting--several transfers of membership from other communities and others by confession and baptism.

One short history of the church says, "at the close of this meeting, the church was organized and chartered." Every indication is that this is the case. However, a date for this organization is never given.

In the opinion of this writer, we can get a general idea of when the church was organized. Assuming the aforementioned revival meeting began in early or middle August and lasted for several weeks, I believe we are justified in assuming a September, 1899, date is as near as we are going to come to the actual date.

Various and, I believe, erroneous dates have been presented in the past. With most of them, we can understand the misunderstanding of the records to come up with them. One of these in particular can be easily reasoned. The June 4, 1933, KINMUNDY EXPRESS advertises that the Christian Church will be celebrating their 32nd Anniversary on an upcoming Sunday. It is possible that they were seeing the 1901 date on the cornerstone of the building and assumed that to be the church organization date.

In the history of Kinmundy prepared for their Centennial in 1957, the church section gives the date for the Christian Church as "about 1900." At that time, with no history of the church being kept and no official records available, that was the best they could do.

In a church "Membership Directory" prepared in the early 1970's, 1898 was given as the charter date. For this date, we can find no proof, and thus, we reject it.

One of the authors goals in the early research done for this booklet was to find an approximate date for the official organizing of our congregation. Unless some unknown sources are eventually uncovered, we believe the date of September 1899 is the best we can do.

## THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

When the church was organized, the forty-one charter members sought to properly fellowship and worship together. Regular services were again held as they rented the Knights of Pythias Hall, and the Old School Presbyterian Hall.

On July 4, 1901, E.C. Bargh purchased a lot at the corner of Third and Monroe Street. The congregation soon set out to build a building of worship. Financing the building was difficult, as some of their early records show great concern about the raising of funds for the building project. When the money wasn't available, work stopped.

The building was finally made ready for services in the summer of the next year. A dedication service was held on June 1, 1902, with a well-known Restoration Movement preacher, Zachary T. Sweeney, presenting the dedication sermon.

Evidently, things went well for the church for the first twenty years or so. Indications are that the church continued with consistent growth and decent attendance. Haynes book on Illinois'

Disciples' History, which was published in 1914, includes in the Kinmundy entry that their "Bible School began in 1899; present enrollment, 134." With an enrollment that large after only fifteen years, shows good growth numerically by this new body of believers.

For some reason, the next thirty years (Approximately 1917-1947) would be difficult ones for our church. What few Sunday School records are available reveal that attendance was considerably less than in the early years. Anywhere from 30-40 might attend Sunday School. No Worship attendance records are available for any of these years.

It has been said that it was not an unusual case to have just a few gather, study a lesson, have a prayer and the Lord's Supper, and then leave. For the most part, preachers didn't stay long, and when they did have a preacher, preaching was usually done on a twice-a-month set up.

The early 1940's were the most difficult for the church. This was the war years and many of the men were gone. Weekly services continued to be held with the women fulfilling most of the necessary duties.

It was during this trying time that an uncommon event took place--a woman preacher served this congregation. ("Uncommon" in that the New Testament does not allow such a practice as woman

preachers. This was, therefore, not a common practice among Bible-preaching, Bible-practicing, conservative New Testament churches.)

Many questions were asked of those who were in town at that time. The few who were in the church at that time can not remember all the circumstances surrounding the coming of Mollie Carr Brown to serve as minister. We were able to come up with a few bits and pieces here and there, and this writer has come to the following conclusion on the matter.

It appears that Richard Leland Brown (usually written R. Leland Brown in most available sources) was called to serve the church. He was a well-known debater, preacher, and evangelist. His first wife, Winifred Ann, had passed away, and he was remarried to Mollie Carr, a Johnson Bible College graduate. His coming to serve here would have been in late 1940. Those who recollect best say that they can remember he was in poor health when he came, and no one can ever remember him preaching. His illness lingered requiring much care from those who nursed him. Our sources believe that in order to avoid just "kicking them out" and hiring a different preacher, the church allowed Mrs. R. Leland Brown (Mollie Carr Brown), an able Bible scholar herself, to fill the pulpit for the time being.

Sometime during 1941, R. Leland Brown died. Mollie Carr Brown continued for a short time working with the church but would eventually move back to her hometown of Grover Hill, Ohio to work with the Church of Christ in that City.

After the war things began to pick up with the church. Church socials were becoming a common thing with the Sunday School Classes. Attendance with the Bible School picked up from a low point of twenty or so and by the late 40's was consistently well over 50.

In the course of the first fifty years of the church, only two men were known to serve as Elders of the church. They were E.C. Bargh and Bro. Cheadle. They were consistently the only ones to serve at the Lord's Table and would word the prayers on most occasions.

With the war over and the nation experiencing revival in most facets of life, the stage was set for a spiritual revival as well. This opportunity was fortunately met with action on the part of these faithful few as you will see.

## THE PREACHERS

We choose at this point to list for you the preachers who have served the Kinmundy Christian Church. Since 1949, we have good records to look at and to be somewhat specific as to the order and time of their ministries. Concerning the preachers of the first fifty years, this writer has consulted several sources and admits that there may be mistakes and omissions, but being only human, he pleads only for mercy from those who find such error(s).

To the best of my knowledge, this is the list of those who served, the dates of their work here, and other pertinent information:

Bro. Berry	1899-1900
Frank O Fannon	1900-1915

(Served this church longer than any other minister. His ministry was of the part-time variety, making it to Kinmundy about two or three weekends per month. The local paper indicates that on those weekends when he was here, a Saturday night preaching service was often held. He worked in his home area of Centralia and would travel up from there.)

Ernest Reed	1916- ?
Oscar Hawkins	early 20's
K.A Williams	1924

James F. Rosborough 1927-1930

(A Crawford County, Illinois, native, it is said that he was a powerful preacher and preached throughout Illinois.)

Lloyd V. Lovell 1930-1935

(One of the few early preachers to live on the field. Lovell was a Kinmundy native and had moved out of state for work in those tough times. Upon losing his job, he had traveled back to town where a revival meeting was being held with Rosborough doing the preaching. Lovell was asked to preach at one of the week night services. A week later, Lovell was the church's new preacher. He served a lengthy ministry, comparatively speaking. He was related to the McCulley's of our town.)

Chester Esque 1936

R. Paul Arnold 1937-1940

R.L. Thorpe 1940

R.Leland Brown  
and Mollie Carr Brown 1940-1941

George Kelly middle 40's

B.F. Mahon late 40's

Everett Field 1948-1949

(He would later assist with the "Big Revival" of 1949. It is said he served as the song-evangelist. He was a native of Patoka)

Thomas McGee 1949

(Bro. McGee was a student at Lincoln Bible Institute and drove down to preach at Mason two Sundays a month. He was then approached by some leaders from Kinmundy to come do the same for them. He did so for about six months, alternating Sundays with Mason, until the coming of DeBault.)

Delmar D. DeBault 1949-1951

(Having served as the preacher in the "Big Revival" of '49, he then chose to return to this town from which he had graduated from High School. He was to be the first "full-time" preacher for Kinmundy.)

Harold L. Burnside 1951-1954

Everett Thompson 1954-1955

Rufus G.D. Gerkin Nov 27, 1955-Dec 29, 1958

Tom Watson Feb 16, 1959-Aug. 6, 1961

Ray Pierson Aug 13, 1961-Dec 30, 1962

Wesley Cornell Jan 6, 1963-May 29, 1966

Neal Kenley June 19 1966-May 30, 1971

George Ansley Aug 1, 1971-Mar 24, 1974

Dale Hunt May 12, 1974-Oct 28, 1979

Les Boldt Dec 30, 1979-Aug 28, 1983

Dwight Shaffer Mar 11, 1984-

Also serving the church was Bill Graham as a Youth Minister one summer in the late 1970's.

Since October 25, 1981, Kinmundy native, Mike Courson has been serving the church as an Associate Minister. This has been a week-end ministry during his schooling at St. Louis Christian College.

## FROM THE BIG REVIVAL UNTIL NOW

With high expectations, a two-week revival meeting was planned to begin in late February, 1949. Little did those people know the significance this meeting would hold. It would later be referred to as "The Big Revival" by all who looked back on it.

Delmar DeBault, a young preacher from the area was chosen to speak for the meeting, and Everett Fields of Patoka lead the singing. Hundreds of people would be attracted to this meeting, with about 50 or 60 of those making decisions at the close of the services.

With such grand results, it was decided that the meeting would be protracted and thus continue as long as necessary. It was to last at least four weeks as success continued.

With a new excitement sparked by the meeting, this body of believers, many young in the faith, sought to keep the excitement going. Reports show that this was the case. 1949 was the year that many would make decisions for Christ under the ministries of McGee and DeBault. So the revival was not to last only a few weeks, but rather for several years.

If Sunday School is any indication of the good that a church is doing, then we have all the information we need to reveal the continued zeal of these folk. Attendance hovered well under 40 for the most part of the 1940's. However, in 1949, Sunday School averaged 110 in attendance. But it doesn't stop there. Here is the average attendance for some of the years to follow:

1950	-	115
1951	-	142
1952	-	156
1953	-	166
1954	-	171
1960	-	187
1961	-	196
1962	-	200
1963	-	199
1964	-	185

Sources tell us that many of these people in attendance for Sunday School did not stay on hand for Worship Services. Worship Service attendance would tend to run several less. Why it was this way, we could only speculate. Many were concerned and attempted to remedy the situation. Eventually more would be attending Worship than Sunday School.

With the large attendance, the original building was not large enough to house the Sunday School. Thus, during the ministry of Tom Watson, in 1961, Several Sunday School classrooms were added on to the back of the building. This would adequately fit the needs of the church until the late '70's when worship attendance then began to cause the building to "bulge at the seams." Since that time, Worship Services have continued to climb until now, it is not an unusual sight to see well over 200 in attendance. With an auditorium that seats barely over a hundred and an overflow area to seat another seventy-five or a hundred when packed tightly together, a new church-house began to be considered. Several plans have been drawn up in the past, and now it looks as if this necessary building program will be a reality.

Another noteworthy event took place in the late 1960's during the ministry of Neal Kenley. Many congregations were experiencing and going through some unwanted ordeals because of the Disciples of Christ denomination. Lawsuits and public trial settings were taking place with some of our sister congregations involved.

The leadership of the church saw that problems could arise in the future if proper action was not taken. A letter was sent by the Elders to the

International Convention of Christian Churches resulting in a reply on April 1, 1968. It was the official notification that told of the name of our church being withdrawn from the Yearbook of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ).

The church owned no parsonage in the first fifty years, but since the time of Bro. DeBault's ministry, a parsonage has been provided by the congregation. Their first house provided for the preacher stood on Monroe Street just north of the church building on the east side of the street. This house still stands although it is no longer the property of the church.

During the ministry of Dale Hunt, more property was purchased adjacent to the church lot. Plans were made to erect another parsonage on this section leaving room for expansion of the church facility. A nice, large house was built to provide plenty of living space for any preacher that might come. The Hunt family was the first to occupy the new parsonage.

Additional parking space has been purchased across the street from the present church building to meet the needs of this growing church.

We pray that this church will always be a growing church with able leaders like those of the past. With members who care and love the Lord, this church will never die.

# ADVANCE

(By J. F. Rosborough)

If you can humbly give a reason, true,  
For living hope, secure within your breast;  
If you have heard Christ's gracious call to you:  
"Come unto me and I will give you rest";  
If you have gone to Him and trust Him, still  
For pardon, guidance, comradeship and love;  
If you have yielded mind and heart and will  
To Him who died for you and reigns above;  
If you can keep your loyalties unbroken,  
With open mind to every vital fact,  
Then, you're a Christian by this token,  
Exalt this worthy name by word and act.

If you know how to pray for strength when weak,  
And feed upon the precious bread of life;  
If you maintain the Christian spirit, meek,  
Yet be God's soldier in the mighty strife;  
If for all trespass you're forgiving,  
But for your trespass always take the blame,  
Then, with the immortals you are living  
Above the lure of sordid gain or fame.

If you can see the world through vision, clear—  
The under-nourished, body, mind and soul,  
The burdened men and women, childhood's tear,  
Millions who grope in darkness, without goal;  
If you would be to all mankind a brother,  
Like Him who loved all men, their hard paths trod,  
If you would save, not self, but save another,  
Then, you are walking with the Son of God!