

Historical Record of the History of the Belton Christian Church

The Belton (Missouri) Christian Church was organized in May, 1867 at the home of John G. Holloway, four miles northwest of Belton in Jackson County. The group of neighbors who met on that occasion and who became charter members of the organization were: Mr. & Mrs. John G. Holloway, Isaac Holloway, Delia Holloway, Jacob Keeney, John T. Keeney, Cynthia McSpadden, Mary E. Keeney, Elvira Keeney and Jane Young. Of this number, Delia Holloway was the last to pass on to glory.

Over a three year period, from 1867 to 1870, this little Christian group met for worship in neighborhood homes and in the school house which then stood on the northwest corner of the crossroads at High Blue, one half mile west of Belton. They frequently met at the farm home of F. B Oldham. During this period of organization and growth in 1867, the officers were:

Elders - John G. Holloway and Jacob Keeney

Deacons – John Fox

In 1868, the same three with two others added – F. B. Oldham, Elder and Richard Crump, Deacon. This comprised the officary.

In 1868, three officers led a building project to provide a church home for their growing congregation. The building, a frame structure, was located at High Blue on the southwest corner of the intersection and was completed in 1870. In November of that year, Brother Marion Todd, an evangelist, held a protracted meeting in the new church and among the converts was Brother P. M. Walton who became a faithful elder and Sunday School teacher. His was the first confession of faith after the church was organized. Converts were baptized at the farm home of Brother Oldham in a creek or taken to the Grand River.

The first pastor for the new congregation was Brother Mellon who ministered for about two years and was succeeded by Brother Samuel Jackson.

In the meantime, the town of Belton had been started and was growing. In 1878, after eight years at High Blue it was decided to move the church building to the downtown area of Belton where the Presbyterian Church stands today. This was done during the ministry of Brother Monser. According to an account given by Miss Frances Keeney in 1955, "everyone believed in a faithful study of the scriptures and endeavored to be earnest and devout. Dancing, swearing, card playing and wine bibbing were strictly forbidden. Any member found guilty of these things was soon called upon by the elders and exhorted to confess his faults and change his manner of living. If he failed to do so, he was turned out by the church."

The original building was used for seventeen years after moving to Belton. When it provided inadequate for the growing congregation, it was replaced in 1895 with a new frame and brick veneer structure. During the building, the church met on Main Street in the Cold Snow building. The architect for the building was L. G. Middaugh of Kansas City. The business manager was W. I. Williams. The building was dedicated in the spring of 1895. Rev. James Meyers of Sedalia was the speaker. In total, the cost had been estimated at \$8,000.00 and dedicated debt free.

During the ministry of Brother George Atkins, a Working Plan was adopted and functional committees were setup. During the time of Brother Merlin Stratton, the building was redecorated on the inside and much new equipment was purchased. A fund for a new building also began. Because of Belton's rapid growth, the building built in 1895 was rapidly becoming insufficient.

In 1961, plans were completed to move the church to three and a half acres given to the church at Westover Road and Airway Lane. In September 1961, Rev. Richard L. Person and his wife Deloris were call to be the pastor. Deloris was the music director during their time here.

The fellowship hall, offices and church school rooms began in 1962 and completed in 1963. The parsonage was built and dedicated in 1966. By 1968 all bills had been paid for the educational unit and the parsonage. Fellowship Hall doubled as a sanctuary and the attendance was so great that it was necessary to have two services. In 1971, the church was ready to proceed with the construction of the sanctuary. Working with the Board of Church Extension and Bill Fullerton (the architect), the plans for the sanctuary were completed. The estimated cost of this project was \$225,000.00 which included pews and a new organ. The Building Fund raised \$180,000.00 which was \$20,000.00 more than the Church Extension said was possible for a church of Belton's size.

Facing its need, the church was challenged to move ahead in building the sanctuary. The additional classrooms, balcony and steeple were determined to be not necessary at that time. The work was completed in 1972. By 1978 the church has paid off all notes on the sanctuary addition. It was during this time, from the early 1970's to the late 1980's that three things happened which were a challenge to the church. Richards – Gebaur, which had threats of closing for several years, had finally closed. Foxwood Springs Living Center began and Raymore Christian Church was built at the edge of Foxwood Springs.

Belton Christian Church lost 39 members when the base closed. These members were replaced in large part by members who moved into the vacated homes. Also, as Foxwood Springs developed it helped fill the void left by the base closing. With the establishment of Raymore Christian Church, once more the church faced a loss of members. Forty-four members

were commissioned at a special service to become charter members of the new church. Again, by the grace of God, the loss was not felt that much. Attendance remained steady and evangelistic effort replaced those members sent to the Raymore congregation.

Free of debt in the 1980's and increasing in membership, the church called an associate minister who served four years before moving to Virginia. In 1986, the board recommended that the steeple and cross be put in place and that the church school rooms be completed. It was determined that the balcony area was really not suitable for additional seating, so this was left out of the plan. Using money left in a memorial fund and having a building fund campaign, the work was completed and paid for without having to borrow to complete it.

In September 1986, Deloris Person was forced to retire from her teaching position in the Belton School District due to health reasons. She continued to direct the music program until December 1987 when she had a heart attack. This further limited her participation in the music program. Failing health led Rev. Person to announce his retirement on June 30th, 1988. What the church, the preacher and his wife begun was completed and paid for at this time. God had blessed the church through 27 years of growth and participation in local, regional and national work of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

In July 1988, Dr. Sheldon Shirts was called as interim minister and served until April of 1989. At that time Dr. Maurice Johnson was called to the pastorate and served until 1994. Dr. Johnson retired and moved to Arkansas. Dr. Tom Fromer was called as interim around Easter 1994 and served until Labor Day. Rev. Person, who had returned to the Belton area and was attending church, accepted the interim position and served from September 1994 until October 1995.

Dr. Ron Routledge was called in October of 1995 and led the church in a period of renewed effort and growth. This period saw the church on Sunday mornings reach an average of 175 in attendance. It was quite a blow when Dr. Routledge felt it necessary to leave the ministry and move to Columbia, MO. Ralph Keller, a retired Air Force Chaplain, served in 2001 and 2002 as the interim pastor. It was a good ministry and the church continued the growth from before.

Around Easter 2002, Dr. Jim Bottrell was called to be the pastor. He and his wife Ginny, who was the Education Director, continued the ministry which ten persons began over 140 years ago as the Belton Christian Church came into existence. Under their leadership, the church has a music program, which includes an excellent choir and bell choir. Also, the Christian Education programs are growing and a wonderful caring spirit is felt in the fellowship of the members.

Belton Christian Church's history has had good and bad times. By the grace of God, the work continues in prayers, commitment and the efforts of the congregation today.

A list of the ministers who have served this congregation is listed as follows:

Brother Mellon	1870-1871
Samuel Jackson	1871-1875
Brother Tennyson	1876
Brother Nickerson	1877
Brother Monser	1878-1880
J. H. Hughes	1881-1884
J. A. Brooks	1885-1888
Samuel Crutcher	1889-1892
R. L. Fife	1893
O. P. Shrout	1894-1897
Brother Otto	1898-1899
B. E. Dawson	1900-1901
Brother Shields	1902-1903
M. F. Redlien	1903-1904
W. H. Scrivner	1905
John B. Dickson	1906-1908
E. S. Morrison	1908-1909
William Funderburk	1910-1913
Brother Garnett	1913
T. N. Houser	1914-1916

Brother Cravens	1916
Brother Trader	1917
W. H. Pinkerton	1918-1921
Romans Smith	1922-1928
Tom Parish	1928-1934
C. A. Lemon	1934-1937
R. S. Quinn	1939-1942
E. T. Lewis	1942
C. A. Abbott	1943-1946
George Atkins	1946-1951
Merlin C. Stratton	1951-1955
O. B. Davis Jr.	1955-1956