

CENTRAL FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH

It was a small, feeble start in the eyes of the world, but a giant step in faith, as the congregation attended the first Sunday morning worship service on February 29, 1976 at the West Chesapeake School in Chesapeake, Ohio. The church was originally organized as the First Free Will Baptist Church on February 25, 1976 following a prayer meeting at the home of Rev. Carl Vallance with 37 in attendance. That first Sunday morning saw 75 in Sunday School, 78 in morning worship service and 92 in the Sunday evening worship service at the inception of the First Free Will Baptist Church.

On Easter Sunday, April 7, 1976, the Charter of the Church was officially opened for membership privileges and a total of 82 regular members and 1 honorary member joined the church and became charter members prior to the closing of the Charter on July 4, 1976.

The name of the church was changed to Central Free Will Baptist Church when the congregation moved across the Ohio River to Huntington, West Virginia and temporarily held services in the Huntington YMCA. Mid-week prayer services and bible study were instituted on Thursday evenings at a sister Free Will Baptist Church before the services were moved to makeshift quarters after purchasing the present site of the church.

The members of Central Free Will Baptist congregation come from many professions and from a large geographic area. Because some families traveled as far as 30 miles one way for services, the congregation sought a permanent location that would be convenient and accessible to all. After examining several parcels of land in Huntington, a corner lot located at 6th Avenue & 5th Street, near the center of Huntington, was purchased. The property contained two 2-story frame houses, and a 3-story brick house with a full basement, with a total of 25,500 square feet of usable property. Work was begun in late October, 1976 to convert the frame houses into a temporary auditorium. The men of the church joined the first floors of the two buildings to form the temporary auditorium under the supervision and guidance of Pastor Vallance, who is an experienced carpenter. The brick house was remodeled with fire doors and partitions to be used as an educational building and still is used for this purpose.

The first Sunday services were held on the property on November 28, 1976, the Sunday after Thanksgiving, with 148 in attendance in Sunday School. Most of the men worked until 4:30 a.m. that Sunday to put the finishing touches on the auditorium.

These same faithful men were still present for the first service. A special offering of \$8,195.00 was collected that first Sunday to be applied to the indebtedness of the church.

The first week on the new property, revival services were held with Rev. Caudill Adkins as the Evangelist and four souls made confessions for Christ.

The building committee of the church presented building plans for our beautiful sanctuary and main budding to the congregation on June 4, 1979. The sanctuary was designed and engineered by Pastor Carl Valiance's own son, Robert Valiance, and Don Costello. Both men are professional Engineers.

On December 27, 1979, a very bold bond program to finance the structure was approved by the members up of the church during the quarterly business meeting as the congregation exercised its courage and faith in God's benevolence and provision. Sale of the bonds totaling \$350,000 began on February 24, 1980 when Bond 91 was sold to Rev. Tom Lilly. The sale of the bonds was completed on October 5, 1980 in only 222 days, when Bond #430 was purchased by Pam Anderson.

What an exhilarating experience it was to participate in the ground-breaking service on Easter Sunday, April 6, 1980. The day was filled with sunshine and hearts were full of joy and hope.

Much prayer, hard work, planning, coordination and self-sacrifice were expended by the membership during the summer and fall of 1980 as the building raised from the ground and became a permanent landmark for God on the comer of 6th Avenue & 5th Street.

It should not be denied by anyone that the building construction was a **MIRACLE FROM GOD** when the construction was completed in only 239 days.

During the Christmas Season of 1986, Central Free Will Baptist Church was host to the first Brotherhood Conference Mass Choir where the Cantata "Let The World Rejoice" was performed under the direction of Randy Davis.

Open house and dedication services were held in the new building on MIRACLE DAY, November 30, 1980 when there were 308 in Sunday School and a combined total of over 1,000 present in all the services throughout that day. The church record offering of \$15,1528 was also recorded on this one MIRACLE SUNDAY.

Progress has continued through the years as a 7'4" Kawaii Grand Piano was purchased in 1984 for \$9,700 and an anonymous donor purchased the organ for the sanctuary.

The beautiful communion table, located in the sanctuary, was constructed by one of the members, G. B. Berry and dedicated to the memory of several deceased members in December, 1989.

On September 26, 1990, we were very pleased and blessed to have elected Rev. James Brady to the office of Associate Pastor.

The property has continued to be expanded with the purchase of the "George Property" on 6th Avenue, just west of the parking lot, in December, 1990. The parking lot was expanded by demolition of the garage building and construction of a retaining wall in February, 1991. Eventually the house will be demolished to enable future expansion of the church.

In August, 1993, the old church van was replaced by a new Ford, extended-cab church van for the bus ministry and serves approximately 15 persons each service. We are trusting God that this ministry may be extended in scope for future growth.

The last payment on the Bond Program, for construction of the main building and sanctuary, was made by Barbara Harmon, Church Treasurer, on August 29, 1994. This is what has precipitated this ***NOTE-BURNING CEREMONY and joyful celebration*** on this our Homecoming Day, September 18, 1994.

The Pastor and congregation of Central Free Will Baptist Church are deeply grateful and wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to all who helped us build by buying or selling bonds for the construction of the budding, to all who have given of their time and labor and to all who have generously donated for the fixtures and furnishings of the church.

The congregation of Central Free Will Baptist Church will never cease to thank God that this month, September, 1994 the bond program was completed. **GOD HAS BEEN GOOD TO CENTRAL FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH!**

The members of Central know the Lord has provided the way and all praise goes to Him:

***"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God!"
(II Corinthians 3:5)***



Charter members of the Church were:

Caudle Adkins	Jackie Day	Cheri Long
Caudle J. Adkins	Brenda Deacon	Zena Mays
Linda Adkins	Ivel Deacon	Kathryn Neace
Patsy Adkins	Nancy Deacon	Esther Reeves
Pam Anderson	Roger Deacon	Jimmie Reeves
Sharrell Anderson	Dreama Doss	Becky Scareberry
Jesse Arnold	Wayne Doss	Donna Scarberry
Bobby Barnett	Betty Eagle	Joann Scarberry
Sharon Barnett	Vonda Eagle	Sue Scarberry
Carolyn Berry	Mary Eden	James Sloan
George Berry	Donna Ellis	Virginia Smith
Katherine Berry	Mike Ellis	Augusta Stephenson
Blanche Booth	James Esque	Carl Sullivan
Charles Booth	Mrs. James Esque	Joanna Sullivan
Opal Bostic	Grace Hager	Carl W. Vallance
Nellie Brumfield	Esther Hagley	Gail Vallance
Bonnie Carter	Barbara Harmon	James Vallance
Dorothy Chaffin	Dewey Harmon	LaVerne Vallance
Grant Chaffin	Rita Holley	Lois Vallance
Moline Childers	Jennifer Kimball	Robert Vallance
Beulah Collins	Carl Lilly Jr.	Hazel Vanatter
Carroll Collins	Carl Lilly III	Sandra Washington
Mary Costello	Sherri Lilly	Chauncey Wetherholt
J. W. Craig	Paula Lilly	Mary Wetherholt
Violet Craig	Bobby D. Lipscomb	Margaret Winters
Cheryl Day	Bobby F. Lipscomb	Homer E. Willis
Jack Day	Wilma Lipscomb	<i>(Honorary Member)</i>

Additional Information from a letter received from the Clerk in June 2015...

Rev. Carl Vallance, the founding Pastor, was a native of Logan, West Virginia, he had been ordained in the Free Will Baptist denomination since 1940 and had previously pastored in the Huntington area for 26 years. He and his wife LaVerne were dedicated to serving the church for almost twenty years until his retirement in 1995. "Preacher" as he was affectionately called, remained at the church and was an ever present help until the Lord took him home.

Rev. Ivan Asbury assumed the pastorate in 1995. He, his wife, Tracy and their two children ministered at Central until he left to pastor a mission church in 2004.

In January, 2006, Steve Williams, a native of Ashland, Kentucky, was selected to fill the pulpit at Central. He and his wife, Jill and their family continue to serve the church with much love and dedication. His soul purpose is proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost and to lead the congregation into a closer Christian walk. Under his guidance, the church continues to be an outreach to the city of Huntington and to the surrounding areas.

First Deacons were: Dewey Harmon; Vonda Eagles; Grant Chaffin.

The Church belongs to the Brotherhood Conference of Free Will Baptist, the West Virginia State Association of Free Will Baptist, and the National Association of Free Will Baptist.

Ministers who have pastored the Central Free Will Baptist Church are as follows:

Rev. Carl Vallance	-----	1976 to 1995	---	19yrs
Rev. Ivan Asbury	-----	1995 to 2004	---	9yrs
Rev. Steve Williams	-----	2006 to present		(2015)

***NOTE:** This information was given to the Historical Committee of the West Virginia State Association of Free Will Baptist, sometime in, or around August 2005. Most of the information was contained in a booklet for the Homecoming and Note Burning Ceremony on September 18, 1994. Additional information was provide by church Clerk in June 2015.*
