

History of the First Church of the Brethren, Springfield, Illinois

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Springfield
(1922)

The Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren was held in Springfield in 1906 and was followed by a Bible institute conducted by Brethren E. B. Hoff and A. C. Wieand of Bethany Biblical Seminary. The district mission board thought it an opportune time to open up mission work in Springfield. The first mission workers were Alma Crouse and Myrtle Watson, who took charge of a mission house in the north part of the city, where they conducted a Sunday school and where various ministers from surrounding Brethren congregations held preaching services.

In October of 1906 the district mission board purchased a two-story dwelling near the mission house. This was used as a new mission home; here Sunday school and two preaching services were held each Sunday, and a midweek prayer meeting was conducted each week.

For a few years some progress was made under the direction of Salome Yordy, followed by Brother and Sister B. F. Heckman, who conducted a series of meetings in the summer of 1908. The work continued until 1910. Six had been baptized. But without a pastor or a church house, and with some members moving away and various discouraging conditions existing, the work was closed for a time.

In September 1920 a three weeks' tent meeting was held by W. T. Heckman and Jesse Shull and wife; Etta Haynes and Fannie Bucher were also helping. Soon a place was secured where work was continued by Etta Haynes and Lora Wagner. A Sunday school was again organized and

regular preaching services were held. An aid society was organized in the home of Sarah Glenwright; also a mothers and daughters organization. In June 1921 Brother Jesse Shull and wife took up pastoral work there. A house was purchased for a parsonage, which was also used for Sunday School and church services.

In 1921-1922 a modern church building was erected at 2115 South Yale Boulevard. The first services were held in the church basement on February 5, 1922, and the complete church was dedicated on May 7, 1922, by J. W. Lear.

In October of that year Brother Moyne Landis held a successful revival, with thirteen accessions. On Sunday, November 5, 1922, the Springfield church was organized with fifty charter members; W. T. Heckman was chosen elder. Jesse Shull continued as pastor until 1926 and has been succeeded by the following pastors: Russell A. Sherman, Allie Eisenbise, Earl Breon, Walter Sell, Roy Brady, Ralph Finnell, Galen Lehman, Russell Wenger, and Leland Emrick.

The church records prior to 1926 are lost. In 1948 the church membership was one hundred ninety-four, with an average attendance at Sunday school of eighty-six, and an average attendance at vacation church school of sixty-two. The eight-fourth district meeting of Southern Illinois was held in Springfield church in 1947.

Elders-in-charge have been: W. T. Heckman, Earl Breon, E. F. Caslow, Galen Lehman, R. C. Wenger, Leland Nelson and Leland Emrick.