

Valley Lake Church of Christ

1951 ~ 2001

50 Years of Serving God and Man

A Note From The Editor

Trying to sum up fifty plus years in a short work has not been easy. Having only been here two and half years, the help of someone like Bernie Wagers has been invaluable. I also want to thank many of you who let us borrow pictures and other documents. These have opened many doors and windows helpful in understanding the half century of ministry done through the Walled Lake Church. I have included many of these pictures, but could not use them all in this short booklet.

It has been inspiring for me to hear and read the stories of faith and devotion many have shared. I know there will be more to come as we share this special day. I feel very privileged to serve as the minister of a church which has done so much for the Lord. I look forward to many years of making history together with you, the present members.

We have been given a heritage by those who had the vision to begin this church. It is up to us to now envision the next phase of our congregation's history. The message of hope in Jesus Christ is the same, even though our community and church has changed greatly. May God guide us with wisdom as we journey together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Roger B. Woods

HISTORY OF THE WALLED LAKE CHURCH OF CHRIST



THE STONECREST BUILDING IN 2001

1950-2001

THE STONECREST YEARS

In the summer of 1950 a small group of Christians began meeting in a room near the old Walled Lake Amusement Park (East Lake Drive and Novi Road.). When the weather turned cold they disbanded with the promise of reuniting in the spring. In the early spring of 1951, Brothers Cameron Sinclair and Gary Flippin met with Brother Logan Sparks and several brethren who lived in the Walled Lake area. Their intention was to persuade them to work with the Plymouth congregation. The Walled Lake brethren

insisted that they intended to establish the Lord's church in Walled Lake. When the Plymouth brethren realized the sincerity of the Walled Lake group, they offered to assist in any way possible. An organizational meeting took place and the present congregation was established in Walled Lake, Michigan.

The first formal worship service took place on April 29, 1951, with Brother Claude F. Witty of the Redford congregation doing the preaching. This worship service marked the beginning of the 48th congregation of the Church of Christ in the Detroit area. There were 73 people present. Many had come from other congregations to encourage the Walled Lake brethren. The Stone crest building, located in the center of town, was rented until a building could be built. Twenty-three of those present placed their membership and pledged their support for the new work. The following Sunday, May sixth, was the first regular meeting of the Walled Lake Church of Christ with an attendance of 29. By July 1, 1951, that number had grown to 82.

According to the original church registry the following were among the twenty three:

Mrs. Oliva Monivene Allen (now Buchanan)
Mrs. Bonnie Burcham
Mrs. William Crawford
Mr. John L. Fisher
Mr. Charles H. Fisher
Mrs. Margaret Fisher
Miss Ruth Fisher
Miss Alice Fisher
Mrs. Johnnie Gurden (Jackie)
Mr. Paul McAllister
Mrs. Theresa McAllister
Mr. Garth McAllister
Mr. Logan Sparks



Founding Minister
Paul McAllister

Mrs. Eliza Sparks
Mr. Courtney Stamper
Mrs. Martha Stamper
Mrs. Jeanne Sauber
Mr. Ralph Weaver
Mrs. Cecile Weaver
Mr. Ladwain Weaver
Mr. William Wyatt
Mrs. Elsa Wyatt

In addition to the names listed, it is safe to assume that there were children also present: Wendell Allen, Tom and Chuck Fisher to name a few.

During the early months of the Walled Lake Church, help was received from many. Brothers Sinclair and Flippin from the Plymouth congregation were very helpful. Brother Sinclair conducted the mid-week Bible study. Three students from Freed-Hardman College, William and Fred Johnson and William Welsh, assisted in the services. Many brethren filled in as guest speakers including Wesley Hawley of Lansing, Connie Wyatt (Van Dyke Congregation), and John Williams (a graduate of David Lipscomb College.)

Brother Paul McAllister was the first regular preacher, serving the congregation a little over five years. Much credit for the early growth of the Walled Lake Congregation must be credited to his drive and enthusiasm.

On October 28, 1951 the first monthly singing was held at Walled Lake; jointly sponsored with the Keego Harbor and Pontiac congregations. It was decided that these singings would be held monthly, rotating the host congregation each month.

Following the song service on October 28, 1951, the Walled Lake Congregation began its first Gospel Meeting, which lasted seven days. J. D. Graves of the Vinewood Congregation in Detroit

did the preaching. By Sunday, April 27, 1952 the attendance had increased to one hundred and there was \$1200.00 in the building fund, according to the annual report written in the Church Registry.

A PLACE OF OUR OWN

In April of 1953 the ground was broken for a church building on land



WALLED LAKE CHURCH OF CHRIST 1964

donated by Brother Charlie Fisher. A special service was held on that date with about twelve congregations attending. Songs were led by song leaders from the area congregations and talks were made by Brother Bunting of Wayne and Brother Lindsey of Keego Harbor. The Walled Lake Church of Christ began meeting in the basement of the new building in January of 1954. An apartment (for the preacher) was built above the basement the following year. Additional land for more parking was purchased just to the west of the building in July of 1956. On June 1, 1958 a new auditorium, which had been built adjoining the original building, was dedicated. Finally, in June of 1972, the current auditorium was dedicated.

OUR MINISTERS

Brother Allen T. Parker served as minister from 1956-1958. This was a time when considerable effort was being put forth to expand the church building.

On February 8, 1959 Brother Carson B. Spivey came to serve The Walled Lake congregation as its full time minister. He served the congregation in that capacity for nine years. In 1959 the floor of the basement underneath the "old" auditorium was poured and it was used as a fellowship hall. The Congregation was rapidly expanding and around 1963 the fellowship hall had to be broken up into classrooms.

In 1960 the Spiveys were able to move out of the apartment in the church building, where they had been living in very crowded conditions, to a house next door (1403 N. Pontiac Trail) that had been purchased by the church to serve as a preacher's home. In 1968 Brother Spivey and his family left Walled Lake so that he could become the director of Mid-Western Children's Home in Milford, Ohio.

Brother Gene Cook became the minister after the Spivey's left. He served the congregation in that capacity for less than a year. It was during this time that the basement floor under the apartment was raised to solve a longtime flooding problem.

On January 5, 1959 Brother Jerrell J. Scott came to serve the congregation as minister. The house directly east of the preacher's house was purchased by the church in 1969. The Walled Lake congregation now owned an entire city block on Pontiac Trail.

On October 18, 1970 the groundbreaking ceremony for a new auditorium was held. The first worship service was held in the new building on August 22, 1971. This was made possible because a wedding had been held the night before and the rental chairs wouldn't be picked up until the next day. The congregation finally began to meet regularly on October 3, 1971. The dedication of the new auditorium was held on June 10, 1972.

Brother Scott was one of the prime movers behind the building

of the new auditorium. His previous ministry had been with the Holland, Michigan congregation. They had just built a new building so Brother Scott knew how to arrange the financing. He found a willing partner in Brother John Sparks. Brother Sparks had just completed building church buildings for the Mio and Howell congregations. Together they convinced the rest of the congregation that a new building should and could be built. A bond issue of \$200,000 was floated and, after paying off existing liens against the church property, \$151,000 was left to build the building. Many said it couldn't be done, and it was difficult, but the building was completed.

On March 14, 1976 Brother Scott left Walled Lake to serve as the minister for the Church in Mattoon, Illinois. In Brother Scott's eight years with the congregation much had been accomplished and he left the Walled Lake congregation with plenty of room for future growth.

On August 8, 1976 Brother Carl Whitelaw came to serve as the regular minister. Brother Whitelaw came from Harding College in Arkansas, where he had been enrolled in preacher training programs. Brother Whitelaw labored with the congregation until September 1977 when he left Walled Lake to fill the pulpit at his home congregation in Milan, Michigan.

On October 2, 1977 Brother Sam Flannery began to work with the congregation. Brother Flannery came to Walled Lake from the Sharon Church in Sharon, Pennsylvania. He brought a missionary zeal to the pulpit. During the summer of 1978 Brother Flannery



MORTGAGE 1985

terminated his ministry in Walled Lake to return to Pennsylvania.

On September 1, 1978, Brother Arvid Rossell began his ministry at Walled Lake. He served in that capacity until November 19, 1979.

In 1980 Brother Coy Roper agreed to come and work with the congregation. He filled the pulpit on Sundays and taught the Wednesday night Bible class while continuing to teach full time at Michigan Christian College. Brother Roper's ministry brought a large degree of stability and direction back to the congregation. On May 31, 1981 Brother Roper, feeling that he had accomplished his goals for Walled Lake, left to begin another ministry in Allen Park.

The Elders decided that Walled Lake was ready for a full time minister again. On June 1, 1981, Brother John H. Qualls moved from Hazel Park, Michigan. Brother Qualls was retiring from Holley Carburetor and wanted to spend part of his retirement preaching. Brother Qualls found a congregation with a Sunday morning attendance averaging 99 and Sunday School averaging 75.

Brother Qualls came to Walled Lake with a plan for Church growth. He labored diligently, especially in the field of personal work. Membership participation in all Church activities began to increase.

Brother Qualls was the champion for a program that bussed children from the Community to the Church every Sunday morning. The young people attended Sunday School and then went to a special youth worship held at the same time as the regular worship. Eventually, there were two busses, bringing in from 30-40 children each Sunday.

In nine and one half years the Walled Lake Congregation's



KIDS ON JOY BUS

average attendance for Sunday morning worship increased from 99 to 158 (counting the children brought in by the bus program.)

On December 30th 1990 John and Romana left Walled Lake and moved to Texas so they could be near one of their sons and enjoy their grandchildren.

In January 1991 Brother Chris Stinnett and his wife Connie moved from Missouri to Walled Lake and Chris became the full time minister. He brought with him a deep and full knowledge of the scriptures and worked very hard to share that knowledge with the Congregation. In 1998 Chris and Connie decided to move to Okalahoma so Chris could be near his ageing parents. While the search for a new full-time minister was conducted numerous brethren from the area filled the pulpit.

On the first Sunday of April in 1999 Roger and Glenda Woods, along with their sons Trevor & Ryan, came to work with the Congregation. Roger and Glenda have worked hard to become known in our community. They are leaders in the Boy Scouts of America at both the Cub Scout & Boy Scout levels. They also volunteer in the local elementary school (Mary Helen Guest) and Glenda serves in the PTA. We look forward to a long tenure with the Woods family.

Their coming also started yet another phase in the expansion of the physical plant of the church. It was decided that the Preacher's House needed up-grading. A 33 x 18 foot extension was added to the front of the house and a 20 x 20 attached garage was added to the side. The house is now a very attractive four bedroom home and is positively seen by our neighbors and community.

Over the years a number of men and women have helped minister to the youth of our congregation. We have also had several men who served as "Youth Ministers." The longest serving Youth Minister was Greg Campbell. He served in that position from January 1984 until October 1995. He helped several "waves" of youth develop in their faith. In addition to his duties

here at Walled Lake Greg served as the coordinator of the Michigan Bible Bowl competition, a volunteer ministry he continues to this day. We are privileged to enjoy he and Karen as they continue to serve the Lord here at our congregation.

Jim Truex, along with his wife Beth, served as Youth Minister for five years, from 1995 until 2000. Jim is well remembered for his willingness to get “slimed” for the kids at VBS.

OUR ELDERSHIP

Throughout its history, the Church meeting at Walled Lake has been blessed with dedicated men serving as Elders. The first eldership at Walled Lake was established on September 9, 1956. Brothers Charles Fisher, Logan Sparks, and William Wyatt made up that original eldership. Since then the following men have served as Elders: Sparks, Parsley, Weaver, Parker, Sparks, Tom Fralich, and Arvid Rossell. Roy Wagers and Ronald Savage are currently serving as Elders for the Walled Lake Church of Christ.



Logan Sparks



Charles Fisher



William Wyatt

Since then the following men have served as Elders: John W. Robert, Ralph Deane, Dean Sparks, Tom Fralich, and Arvid Rossell. Roy Wagers and Ronald Savage are currently serving as Elders for the Walled Lake Church of Christ.

OUR MEMBERS

Certainly no church can continue without a solid base of working saints to do the day-in and day-out work of the Lord. We have been blessed with many who have given hours upon hours of their time to the Lord.

Over the years our women have prepared the Lord’s Supper,

taught Bible classes, cleaned, organized funeral meals, Blood Drives, Mother—Daughter Banquets, pot-luck dinners, fundraisers for M.C.C., they even nailed nails and laid tile while building the first church building. We could not have made it without their dedicated service.

Our men have also contributed their talents. Many have served as deacons, committee chairman, or filled in the pulpit when needed. Others spent countless hours fixing busses, repairing the building, teaching Bible classes, and serving in the worship service.

What a blessing these men and women have been to the Walled Lake Church of Christ, and will continue to be as we move into our next 50 years.

PRESSING ON

As one reads this history it is plain that the

Congregation has had some good times and some bad times. It becomes evident that, throughout the fifty years of the Walled Lake Church of Christ's existence, the focus has always been to carry the message of Christ to the community. While there have been differences of opinion on the methods there has been little disagreement on the mission of the Lord's Church meeting at Walled Lake.

Many members of the Church who worshiped at Walled Lake have gone home to be with their Savior. The work of the Church has been passed down to those that are left behind. Some of the children of the "Stonecrest Era" are now the senior members and



MOTHER – DAUGHTER BANQUET 1976

leaders of the Church as it enters the 21st Century. We can only look back at the struggles of the past; we do not know what challenges lay ahead but, with God on our side, who can be against us?

Fifty years ago a few men had a dream. Today that dream is a reality thanks to their foresight, leadership, and dedication to the Lord. Those of us who labor and worship with the Church here at Walled Lake are the beneficiaries of their efforts. May the members who attend the one hundredth birthday of the congregation look back on our efforts and be inspired as we have been by the strength and devotion of those mentioned in this narrative.

Respectfully submitted by Bernie W. Wagers
September 30th 2001.

Church Record

April 29, 1951 to April 28, 1953

Sunday, April 29, 1951

This is a day long to be remembered by the members of the Church. For it marks the beginning of the 48th congregation of the Church of Christ in the Detroit area.

Walled Lake, Michigan was the place. About twenty three people gathered in the Stone Crest Building there, to assist in the opening of this new work, Brother Claud F. Witty, who has been absent for the past eleven weeks because of illness, preached the first sermon.

Brother Cameron Sinclair, who is now with the Plymouth Congregation, and Brother Gray Flippin also of Plymouth, were very helpful in starting this new work.

Our Brother Paul McAlister, who has been preaching at Redford in the absence of Bro. Witty will preach for the Walled Lake Church.

Brother McAlister requests, that all Church members will ask God to grant him strength of body wisdom and spiritual fortitude to do the kind of work that will be pleasing to God and a blessing to the people here.

July 22, 1951

The work in the Church at Walled Lake, has been ably assisted by the presence of (waiting or assisting?) preachers & collegen students.

Three Students from Freed-Hardeman College, William & Fred Johnson & William Welsh have helped us considerably in our services. May the Lord bless them in their future study and work.

Brother Wesley Hawley of Lansing, Michigan, preached for us June, 27. Both morning & evening services. Brother Connie Wyatt of the Van Dyke congregation did our preaching July 1. Brother John Williams a graduate of David Lipscomb, was with us July 15. We are very grateful to these Brethren for their excellent work. We ask the Lord's blessings on them.

We feel grateful indeed to Bro. Sinclair for his work. Bro. Sinclair conducts our midweek Cottage prayer meetings. And is doing an excellent job.

Aug. 29, 1951

On this date, at the Home of Br. Logan Sparks the members of the Walled Lake Church of Christ, held a special thank you service for Bro. Sinclair. Refreshments were served after the Service. The service was well attended, as several visitors were present.

Sept. (1 or 2?), 1951

On this date Bro. McAlister is on a much delayed vacation. He informs us that it has been thirty years since his last one. We wish him a happy vacation & safe return. Brother Wiser an Elder at the Wayne congregation is to preach for us at both Morning and Evening Service.

Sept. 16, 1951

Still in the absence of bro. McAlister, Bro. Sinclair of Plymouth, preached for us at Morning & Evening Services. We enjoyed both Bro. Wiser and Bro. Sinclair very much.

Oct. 28, 1951

The first monthly singing service of the Keego Harbor, Pontiac, and Walled Lake Congregations, was held on this date, at Walled Lake. In the future their meeting will be held on every 4th. Sunday. They are to be at one of the above mentioned Church Homes.

Oct. 28, 1951

This was a very big day for the Walled Lake Church members. After an excellent singing service, our first Revival meeting began in the Evening. The very able J. D. Graves of the Vinewood Congregation, Detroit, Mich., did the preaching. The meeting

Continued seven days. There were no additions during this time, but we consider the meeting a great success.

Sunday April 27, 1952

The first year of work of the walled Lake Congregation ended on this date. We are happy to state that the attendance increased from twenty three to one hundred during this year. We feel like we have come a long ways in this time. But realize that we are only beginning.

We now have about twelve hundred dollars in our building fund, and with the help of God, we hope to be able to soon begin a building program.

With Bro. McAllister directing the program, and with several visiting preachers and Song leaders, we had a wonderful day of services. We feel that we owe these Brethren a lot for their able assistance, and ask the Lord's blessing on them.

Claud F. Witty born March 1, 1877 was buried November 29, 1952, Grand Lawn Cemetery, Detroit Mich. He was known and loved by thousands of people. He delivered the sermon at the first meeting of the Walled Lake Congregation, April 29, 1951. He again preached a fine sermon here October 12, 1952.

April 28, 1953

This date marks the completion of two yrs. Work by the Walled Lake Congregation. During this year there has been nine (9) baptized. A building fund started and the earth turned for our new building. On this date a special service was held from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. There were about twelve (12) congregations represented. Songs were lead by the leaders of different Congregation, talks were made by Bro. Bunting of Wayne & Bro. Lindsey of Keego Harbor. Christian fellowship was enjoyed by those who attended.

During this year we lost one well loved member by death,

Robert Shoemaker.



CHURCH BUILDING 1980'S



CHURCH BUILDING 2000



EVERETT & KAREN STAMPER'S BAPTISM



DEBBIE SPARKS



ELIJAH WAGERS



TESSA STIMAC



1999 MACINAW CAMPING TRIP



NAN JENT & VANESSA CRAWFORD



LOGAN & ELIZA SPARKS



A NOBLE CLAN
J.C., ROBERT, CAROL, MARY CHILDERS, GLENDA, DARRELL