



History of First Christian Church

It began in the home of Mrs. Eliza Vertress. A group of people, devoted to Christ, gathered to worship. The exact date of the first meeting isn't known, but it probably took place during 1877, and the church was formally "organized" in September, 1878. What they started continues today with the congregation we call First Christian Church.

In the early days people gathered in various homes. Then Mr. and Mrs. D.C. Wintersmith donated a lot at the corner of W. Dixie and Helm Avenue. First Christian's first building was built on that site around 1879. This frame structure served the congregation until a major renovation in 1916.

The following years were difficult. World War I and the Great Depression brought suffering. First Christian Church struggled along with our entire country. But loyal Christians faithfully kept the church alive. Membership grew and debts were paid off.

Strong leaders have led periods of rapid growth. Edgar Yates was the minister for ten years beginning in 1947 when Sunday School attendance doubled.

Growth continued during the ministry of Roy Barnett. Additional pews and a second Sunday morning worship service were added to handle overcrowding. In 1958 the congregation purchased 4.75 acres on N. Mulberry from Mr. and Mrs. M.A. Kerrick. Roscoe "Pap" Waters led the construction and the new building was dedicated on November 19, 1961.

Paul Carrier came to First Christian in 1964 and led a major expansion in mission support. The congregation's first youth minister, Jim Young, was hired. Innovative ideas were exemplified by the church's purchase of an airplane for missionary work in Rhodesia.

The long and effective ministry of Royce Robey began in 1970. An education annex was built in 1976. Some of the church's most successful revival meetings and the use of sports teams as an outreach were significant accomplishments during his 15 year ministry.

Terry Jones began his 20 year ministry at First Christian in 1986. As had been the case in the building on W. Dixie, growth created the need for dual worship services. In 1993, construction began on a family life center. This included one of our greatest days. On "Incredible Day," over \$262,000 was given for the construction project.

Our current minister, Stuart Jones, arrived in 2007. Near the end of 2009 the opportunity came to sell our N. Mulberry property to the Elizabethtown Independent School District. This allowed us to proceed with plans for seeking land and building a new campus. Land was purchased near the intersection of Ring Road and N. Miles Street. The congregation started meeting in rented space at Elizabethtown Christian Academy in November 2010.

June 19, 2011 was another great day at First Christian. On "Celebration Sunday," our congregation committed \$2.83 million to the building project, with over \$1.3 million of the amount being given that day.

Site work began in the fall of 2011 and construction began in May of 2012. The new campus opened in June 2013.

From its beginning in the home of a faithful Christian woman, to locations on W. Dixie, N. Mulberry, W. Poplar, and our new home on N. Miles, the story of First Christian Church is simple and consistent...

It's a story of believers working together to lead people closer to Jesus Christ.