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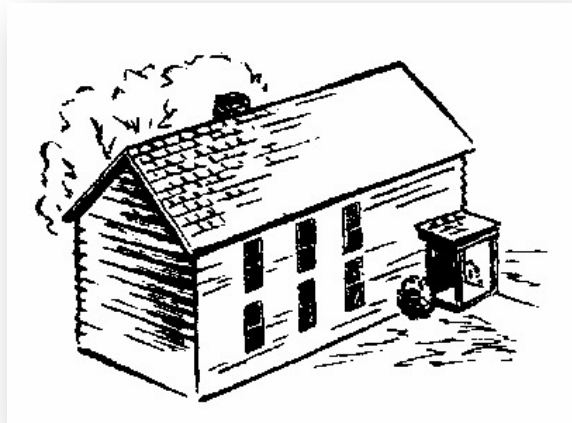
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CHAPTER ONE

The Beginning

The history of Fishers United Methodist Church is rich and rooted in the history of the State of Indiana, the Methodist movement within the state (See Appendix 3) and the town of Fishers itself (See Appendix 2). The town of Fishers Switch was laid out in June of 1872 by Salathiel Fisher and has changed and grown ever since. Soon after its creation, there were enough residents in the town and in the surrounding countryside that a group of forward-thinking individuals and one dedicated pastor had a vision to create a new place for people to worship.

The Fishers Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in 1874 by Rev. D.D. Powell and fourteen members. It was the first official congregation established in Fishers Switch. The first trustees for this new congregation were T.A. Fisher (Thomas Allison Fisher, son of town of Fishers founder Salathiel Fisher – Appendix 2 for the history of Fishers), William McKinstry, and Benjamin Castetter. The congregation met in the schoolhouse for the first year until a small



Artist rendering of original church building
circa 1875. Source: Fishers UMC Archives.

church building could be built in 1875 on the small dirt road running east and west through the tiny community. We know this small dirt road today as 116th Street. That building no longer exists, and no photographs of it exist to our knowledge. The building was located just west of what is now the Fishers Shell station in front of the Target store. The upper floor of this two-story building was used by the Masonic Lodge.

Two other churches shared the services of Rev. Powell. He was the pastor of the “Fishers Circuit” as it was called, which included, in addition to the Fishers Methodist Episcopal Church, New Britton Methodist Episcopal Church and Fall Creek Zion Methodist Episcopal Church. These two churches had been established several years earlier. New Britton

Church was formed in 1852 and held their services in the Baptist Church building in the small community of New Britton, just north of Fishers Switch. Fall Creek Zion Church was organized in 1858 by Rev. Metzker, and initially held services in the Morgan schoolhouse east of Fishers Switch. Fall Creek Zion eventually built a frame church in 1860 and in 1862 they recorded 100 members. However, by 1880, the congregation membership had dropped to only 38 people. The Fishers Circuit also included, at some point, White Chapel and Pleasant Grove (located in Home Place). Rev. Beal succeeded Rev. Powell in 1877 and he was followed by Rev. I.J. Rhodes in 1879. After a very short pastorate, he was succeeded by Rev. R.B. Powell later in 1879 (it is unknown as to whether Rev. R.B. Powell was related to the church's founding pastor), Rev. Carpenter and Rev. Curry (known as "Dad" Curry) who went on to serve the State Reformatory as Chaplain. By 1880, church membership was holding at 15 faithful individuals.

In 1891, the Fishers community was recognized by the Indiana General Assembly and became Fishers Station. The church continued to be called Fishers Methodist Episcopal Church. As the 20th century began and as the community grew, once again the members of Fishers Methodist Episcopal Church had a vision. The congregation was led at that time by Rev. T.A. Graham, who had come to the church in early 1905. Still sharing the small building with the Masonic Lodge, the membership felt that it was time to construct a new church building for the exclusive purpose of congregational worship. A generous donation of land on which to build this new church was given to the congregation by Mrs. Addie Kepner which helped this vision become a reality. Lumber for the project was given by Mrs. Tyne Eller. The timber had been cut and hewn from trees on her land nearby. The construction contract was given to O.N. Applegate of Mattsville, Indiana. The plans for the



Lantern Road Church Building, circa 1924. Source: Fishers UMC Archives.

new building consisted of a 32' X 50' sanctuary and a 14' X 32' Sunday School room. It was to be heated by a furnace, have an elevated floor, and had a total construction cost of \$3,100.

The congregation raised \$1,800 prior to construction and an additional \$1,410 was raised by donations and pledges on the day the congregation dedicated the building. This dedication service was held on Sunday, February 26, 1905. Rev. W.D. Parr of Kokomo, who was the Secretary of the Church Extension society, delivered the sermon for the day. The service also included beautiful music, a reading from scripture and a prayer.

Mrs. Linnie Fisher and Mrs. Gertrude Gentry performed vocal solos. The evening celebration was

led once again by Rev. Parr and music selections were performed by the choir, directed by W.E. Fisher. Church officers at the time of the dedication were:

Class Leaders – Anthony Snyder,
Addie Kepner

Sunday School Superintendent –
William Thompson

President of Ladies Aid Society –
Rilla Clauson

Epworth League President –
Fred Kepner

Stewards – Lennie Fisher and Ingram
Flanagen

Junior League Superintendent -
Addie Kepner

Trustees – Robert Kimberlin, O.M. Fisher,
Ingram Flanagan, Ashley Johnson, James
Castetter

This building is still standing today on what is now known as Lantern Road, just south of 116th St. It sits across the street from the current location of Fishers Elementary School. It is sad that we have uncovered no photographs of the interior of the church. It would be interesting to see what it looked like in 1905. We can possibly get a glimpse of what it

might have looked like by seeing photos of what it looks like today. The following pictures were taken in March 2024. The building is currently being used by Fishers Point Community Church, a church of the Nazarene.



Photographs of inside the 1905 church building,
March 13, 2024. Source: Kim Arnott.

There are beautiful stained-glass windows surrounding the sanctuary and entryway, each given in honor or memory of someone from the early days of the congregation. They may have made donations to the construction and were recognized by their names being included on the windows. These are the names remembered:

Paul and Ora Klepfer

In memory of Nancy Fisher (Henry's wife)

In memory of Henry Fisher (Son of town founder)

In memory of Sarah C. Flanagan

In memory of W.H. & Adella Mock (Adella was daughter of town founder)

R.J. and Emily Craig

In memory of Thomas A. Fisher (Son of the town founder and one of the first trustees)

In memory of Ellen J. Fisher (Thomas' wife)

Edward C. Hume

In memory of Ross R. Beaver

Melbourn and Lizzie Stipp

Clarence Castetter

It is unknown exactly when the first parsonage was built on Lantern Road, but the picture shown here served well as the parsonage through 1927. After the dedication of the new church building, the Fishers congregation welcomed Rev. Hunt as their pastor in 1906. Soon after, in 1907, it was determined that Delaware Township needed a new school to educate the growing population of students. This new school was built just across the street from the Fishers Methodist Episcopal Church (Fishers Elementary sits on that site at the present time).

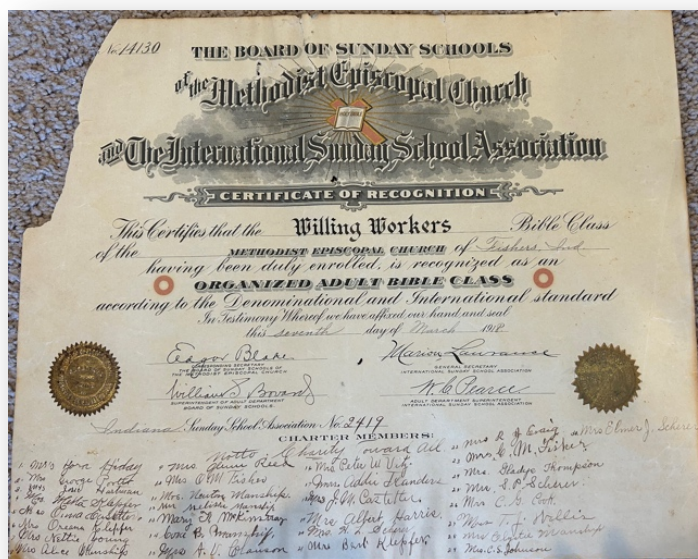


Fishers Church parsonage on Lantern Road prior to 1927. Source: Larry Reynolds, Mudsock Scrapbook.

In 1908, Fishers Station dropped the "Station" portion of the name and simply became known as Fishers. That same year, Fishers Methodist Episcopal Church welcomed Rev. Huddleston as their pastor. It is unknown how long Rev. Huddleston remained with the congregation, but he was succeeded by Rev. South at some point. Rev. DeWitt was appointed in 1911, followed by Rev. Albright and Rev. Edward Bruner through 1915. Progress continued in the Fishers community. The first sidewalks were installed in 1913 and Highway 13, which is now Allisonville Road, was paved. This provided much easier travel for the residents. During these changes in the community, the Fishers congregation welcomed Rev. Herbert Perry to their family who served them faithfully through 1918.

According to Church Historians, Mary Blackford and Lena Beaver, the women of the Ladies Aid Society used the income derived from quilting to help with church debt and pastor's salaries. They earned seventy-five cents for each spool used. Known as the Willing Workers, these women were highly skilled and very talented. Their quilts were beautiful!

We are blessed to have a document that exists from 1918 that establishes and recognizes the Willing Workers Bible Class as an official organized Adult Bible Class. This document was given to the class by the Board of Sunday Schools of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the International Sunday School Association. Dated March 7, 1918, it was signed by the Charter Members listed below.



Willing Workers Adult Bible Class certificate dated March 7, 1918. Source: Fishers UMC Archives.

Mrs. Jora (sp) Hiday	Mrs. George Poolter (sp)	Mrs. Josie Hartman
Mrs. Mella (sp) Klepfer	Mrs. Olivia Castetter	Mrs. Oreana Klepfer
Mrs. Nettie Young	Mrs. Alice Manship	Mrs. Glenn Reed
Mrs. O.M. Fisher	Mrs. Newton Manship	Mrs. Melissa Manship
Mary McKinstry	Cora B. Manship	Mrs. A.V. Clauson
Mrs. Peter W. Vitz	Mrs. Addie Flanders	Mrs. J.M. Castetter
Mrs. Albert Harris	Mrs. H.L. Scherer	Mr. Bert Klepfer
Mrs. R.J. Craig	Mrs. C.M. Fisher	Mrs. Gladys Thompson
Mrs. S.P. Scherer	Mrs. C.G. Cook	Mrs. T.J. Wallis (sp)
Mrs. Clystie (sp) Manship	Mrs. C.S. Johnson	Mrs. Elmer J. Scherer