

Valley Chapel Historical Snapshot (1850-2005)

Steadfastness and vision are the roots of Valley Chapel. More than 150 years ago the seeds were sown that would become Valley Chapel Community Church. Sowing began as ministers of different denominations began holding meetings in the school house across the road from the present church building (The church and the Stockton School frequently worked in tandem). It seems the first of which was Levi White around 1850. But there could have been other “circuit riders” before him. He served for two years at a salary of \$450.00. He was followed by others serving as ministers from one to three years. At the time, the salary these men received was the highest paid in all thirteen townships in Butler County.

The meetings continued until 1866 when Reverend Daniel Griffis, who was assigned to the “Port Union Circuit” of the Methodist Episcopal Church, put forth an effort to improve the situation. Reverend Griffis also served for one year as assistant to the first pastor. A meeting was called which added twenty members who, with some others, immediately set out to build a church building. In five months a building was successfully built and dedicated at a cost of \$1750.00.

This building was built on a plot of ground donated by Enoch Chambers who lived within sight of the church. The interior of the church was plain but furnished well with strong straight-backed pews and coal stoves. The financing was a joint effort by a few with large contributions and others with smaller but equally loving gifts. The original trustees of the church were Enoch Chambers, S.D. Spellman, William Whitlock, Thomas Slade and William Wall.

As the years passed the congregation dwindled to the point the church was closed. It was still used however, for an occasional service or a funeral. But this church building still had a future.

In 1918 the Methodists, who owned the building, decided to sell it. It was learned that someone wanted to purchase the building but move it away to a farm to house cattle. A prominent resident, Allie Crist, offered to buy it and keep it on the site if people wanted a church there and would make it non-denominational so anyone could come to worship regardless of their denominational affiliation. In response, the Ladies Aid Society decided to canvass house to house to learn if enough people were interested in forming a Community Church. The effort was successful and Mr. Crist purchased the church building from the Trustee, Thomas Slade.

A name was chosen and on April 10, 1919 "Valley Chapel Community Church" was incorporated in the State of Ohio. At some point the deed to the building was presented to the trustees of Valley Chapel as a personal gift from Allie Crist to his community. This was Ohio's first incorporated Community Church. On the first Sunday 110 people attended. Reverend J.P. Gallaher was unanimously elected to serve as pastor. He served until 1928. A note of interest is that his successor was a man who attended the same church in his boyhood days. The Ladies Aid Society helped greatly in fund raising as well as some prominent families who made generous cash donations and gifts to the church. Expansion and progress marked the years to come.

In 1938 the building was remodeled with a new entrance, two Sunday school classrooms divided from the sanctuary by folding doors. It was redecorated with new pulpit and altar furniture.

In 1952 more Sunday school rooms and a church office were built. A full basement was added that included more class rooms and a pastor's study was fully furnished and equipped. The project cost was close to \$20,000.00 and accomplished without debt.

In 1955 a parsonage was built on Cheryl Drive. Many people labored toward completion and the church incurred a \$12,000 debt for this endeavor.

In 1957 restrooms were added and most of the \$1500.00 dollars was underwritten by the "Valley Chapel Women's Christian Home Society".

1957 brought another expansion in the form of a larger sanctuary and baptistry. In addition to other things, more classrooms were completed, folding doors installed, and a sound system was installed. The total cost was about \$34,000. Bonds for \$14,000 were sold by the church and \$5000 was borrowed on the signature of twenty members of the congregation.

In 1966, God opened the way for the church to purchase the Stockton school through an interesting, though unlikely, series of events. Since the purchase major repairs have been made inside and out. This building is still in use as Valley Chapel's fellowship hall on the ground level and gym on the second floor. It houses fellowship events, special services, Vacation Bible School, and other activities on a regular basis. The upstairs is fully devoted as a gym and is used for many games and events such as basketball and even a pine wood derby.

1967 saw new pews and carpet, refinished floors and fresh paint.

Since then the Church has seen the relocation of Ross Road from between the church and Annex to behind them both. This change has proved to be a great blessing that helped reduce sound interruptions from CB radios and increase the safety of children playing and crossing the street.

In the late 1990's talk started with Developers concerning the possibility of relocating the church on its present lot to make way for a Walgreens store. After much thought and prayer the church voted to accept the offer which turned out to be a win for all involved.

In the end the original Valley Chapel building was jacked up and moved back off of Route 4 approximately 100 feet and moved south on Route 4 approximately 30 feet. The original addition off the side and the basement were removed. In their place was built a 4000 square foot addition. This addition houses classrooms, nursery, library, pastor's study, church office, expanded restrooms, overflow seating, vestibule and handicap accessible door in the back.

Outside, a new parking lot was added as well as a future parking lot graded but not blacktopped. An additional acre of ground was deeded to the church.

The old School building (Valley Chapel's Annex) was remodeled to allow for services while construction took place on the new building and is used and enjoyed to this day.

In response to the opportunity named "Valley Chapel on the Move" over \$20,000 was given by the Valley Chapel church family for new furnishings and equipment. This led to things like a new sound system, nursery furniture, office furniture, a lighted sign, classroom furniture, carpet and new padding and upholstery on the pews.

Since 1919 Valley Chapel has been served by 16 different pastors each making a unique contribution. God has graciously chosen to preserve Valley Chapel over the years both in organization and doctrine. Not only have we been preserved but in many ways strengthened. God has used many men who served as pastors, trustees, deacons and elders and many women who are to be thanked. Thank you for being instruments in God's able hands.

Today Valley Chapel enjoys the fruit of being a conservative church that emphasizes the sovereignty and grace of God, His glory, the authority and sufficiency of His Word and the family. We also have a strong missionary focus and budget. With a heritage of steadfastness and action like this church has, is it any wonder we see ourselves as "An Established Church with Fresh Vision"? When you consider our rich history, thoughts of what is coming next for Valley Chapel Community Church become exciting.

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