

## **History of Centralia Free Methodist Church**

In the early part of the twentieth century, Mr. and Mrs. C.E. Ring, Mr. and Mrs. Guy Kyle, and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Edwards from the Keyesport church held a tent meeting in the northern part of Centralia. Around 190, C.E. Ring, a local preacher, began holding revival meetings in Johnson Hall on Calumet Street. Later he and Thomas Cutright started the Holiness Mission for the purpose of organizing a Sunday School. Rev C.J. Turnbow introduced Free Methodism to Centralia during these tent meetings.

Records show that a pastor had been assigned to Centralia in 1905. However, it was in the week before the annual conference of 1914 that W.D. Cochran, District Elder of the Greenville District, organized the Centralia Free Methodist Church with fifteen members in full connection and two on probation. It was at this time that C.H. Coates, CFMC's first pastor, began his ministry.

On Sunday, December 7, 1919, G.W. Griffith of Chicago, Illinois, preached the dedicatory sermon for the church on the corner of Third and Elm Streets, purchased from the Congregational Church for \$5,000 by Pastor Elmer McKay and the members.

Tragedy struck when this church burned the night of December 28, 1924, while T.A. Bailey was pastor. Pastor Bailey, the members, and the townsfolk helped to build a new church at the same location. Bishop W.A. Sellew dedicated this building on August 30, 1925 and annual conference was held in Centralia that year.

Under the supervision of Pastor Kendall Mayhew, the church purchased three and one third acres east of Centralia on Route 161 for \$15,000. On June 5, 1966 there was a ground breaking service and Pastor Mayhew preached from Joshua 14:12, "Now therefore give me this mountain. . ." Construction was completed on January 22, 1967. Bishop Myron F. Boyd dedicated a beautiful new church on April 30 of that year and a brick ranch style parsonage just north of the church parking lot was also added. The Lord blessed the church and they held a mortgage burning ceremony on Homecoming Sunday, October 2, 1977. All church property was now free of debt.

Pastor Loren Rovenstine led the church over the next 20 years and God continued to bless the ministry, as a larger fellowship hall was built, a concrete parking lot was laid, and both were dedicated on Sunday April 2, 1992. In 2000, the church remodeled the entire parsonage and added a large living room.

Jeremy Martin, the 32nd minister of Centralia Free Methodist Church, has served as senior pastor since 2012.

\*much of the research and writing of this history was done by Bruce Cromwell, who pastored CFMC from 2001-2007