

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF AUBREY

Historical Narrative researched and written by Mary Alice Reding for Texas Historical Commission THC subject marker application., Denton County (2005)

The Congregation of
The First Christian Church of Aubrey

The First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Aubrey, Texas was officially begun in October of 1894. Names of the leading preachers in its founding are Elder R. C. Horn and E. B. Holmes. Some of the charter and/or early members were: J. W. Apperson, E. B. Holmes, Cap Bonar, Jane Bonar, A. Coffey, Dr. E. M. Bates, Mrs. Mollie Henderson, and J. M. Coffey. (Coffey, Homer L. Information Sheet for proposed book: The Story of Texas Disciples by Colby D. Hall, 1953) The names on the General Warranty Deed of the church also included J. J. Price and W. J. Mullins. (Duggan Abstract Company, Inc., Denton, Texas: Vol. 57, p. 547, 2 Oct., 1895)

"Prior to the actual organization of the present church we met in the Spring Hill Community under brush arbors and in the school house. As we had no regular pastor we were served by ministers of various faiths. ... The service was union also the Sunday School. The following ministers served us as I recall from memory. Bro. Hogan; Wm. White; Bro. Jasper; Bro. McIntire; Robert and Frank Trimble; Bro. H. M. Brandy; Bro. Frank Brandy; Bro. G. W. Weatherly; Bro. Alsup; Bro. Smith; Bro. Robert Horn." (Coffey, Homer L., "A Brief History of the Christian Church of Aubrey." 1953)

Around Christmastime of 1891, Bro. Ed (E. B.) Holmes and family bought a farm and moved into the Spring Hill Community. They began to take an active

part in the worship services and Sunday School. Bro. Holmes was elected to be the Superintendent of the Sunday School. (Coffey, Brief History, 1953, *ibid.*)

"In the fall of 1894, those who were of the faith of the Christian Church decided to build a church building at Aubrey, as there were more [members] of this belief in Aubrey than in the Spring Hill Community. The first building was erected on the site of the present building in the fall and winter of 1894. It was a frame building about 30 feet by 60 feet and stood until April 14, 1918." (Coffey, Brief History, 1953, *ibid.*)

The newly organized church was called the Christian Church according to the Duggan Abstract of October 2, 1895. The abstract shows that L. N. Edwards and his wife M. S. Edwards sold the property to the trustees of the Christian Church "...in consideration of the sum of One Hundred (\$100) Dollars ..." Trustees were J. J. Price, A. Coffey, E. B. Holmes, J. W. Apperson, and W. J. Mullins. The building was located "...on the east side of Main Street at the extreme north end of said street ..." (Duggan Abstract Co. Inc., 1895. *ibid*)

Bro. F. L. Young dedicated the church early in 1895 and served as pastor the rest of that year. Bro. Ed Holmes' son, Eugene was preparing for the ministry at this time. He came home to visit his parents during the summer and held his first revival here in 1896. Mrs. J. L. Covington was his first convert. For the next six years Bros. Eugene Holmes and W. M. Reynolds were the pastors at Aubrey. (Coffey, Brief History, 1953, *ibid.*)

The little church felt its responsibility to the needy of the area as shown by R. R. Tribble's commentary, describing the Aubrey Church as taking "a special interest in the Orphan's and Old People's Home at Dallas, by giving the offerings

of one Sunday in each month and special days like Easter, Rally Day and Christmas, all of which was sent to the Julliette Fowler Home." (Tribble, R. R. "Example of Country Church and Community Work." World Call, September, 1919, p. 32.) The Christian Courier of May, 1909 quoted an April report of giving as follows: "Julliette Fowler Home Treasurers Report, April 1909: Aubrey - \$2.85." (Christian Courier, 1909, Vol. XXII, #21, p. 7)

Around 1914, the year began with about twenty regular attendants at Aubrey. By August there was a regular attendance of seventy to eighty attendees. They had caught a Bible School vision. A. J. Bush, pastor, had served as State Secretary of the Texas Christian Missionary Society in the past (Christian Courier, 1916, Vol. XXVIII, #49) and his leadership had inspired the congregation to expand their horizons in the years 1914 to date (1919). A Christian Courier entry in March of 1916 stated: "Our Bible School is enthusiastically ... preparing for our Summer Revival. ... Our Bible Class teacher, Bro. E. B. Howard, organized a Bible School (Union) at Black Jack with 27 enrolled." (Christian Courier, 1916, Vol. XXVIII, #43, p. 9) "The Aubrey Church assisted in the organization of Bible Schools at Spring Hill, Black Jack, Bellew School House and Rocky Hill. This gave our church a wide country work and, with Colby D. Hall of Texas Christian University as district superintendent, the Denton County work was put on foot." (Tribble, World Call, 1919, *ibid*)

On the fifth Sunday of July in 1917, the Aubrey Church congregation hosted the Denton County Convention. Preaching in the morning and at night, dinner on the ground and a 5:30 p.m. business session provided a happy venue for discussing ways and means to make "the Denton County work permanent".

Present and participating in the meeting were Albert Erwin, C.C. Yancy, and W.C. Fyffe from Denton, Lee Hunter and J.M. Coffey from Aubrey, and Dr. Fleming. At this meeting, the members present elected the new County Board. Elected to the Board were Lee Hunter and R. R. Tribble of Aubrey, C. C. Yancy, W. C. Fyffe and T. H. Mathieson of Denton, J. B. Burk of Pilot Point, C. W. Henson of Corinth, and W. W. Shoffner of Justin. (Christian Courier, 1917, Vol. XXX, #25)

Then, in the Christian Courier of March 14, 1918, W. D. Darnall was quoted as follows; "Aubrey, March 11 - On Sunday I preached to a large and appreciative audience at Pilot Point, Fairview Schoolhouse and Aubrey." (Christian Courier, 1918, Vol. XXX, #47) Just one short month later on April 14, 1918 a tornado destroyed the wooden church building. It was a Sunday night about church time and two of the members were inside. They were uninjured. Bro. Darnall wrote: "At the present we don't know what the church will do, but we must have a new church and our strong churches should at once come to this little congregation's assistance. Pilot Point Sunday raised \$125 on April Drive and more is to follow." (Christian Courier, 1918, Vol. XXX, #52) Also, according to R. R. Tribble (chair of the Building Committee) in the World Call, September of 1919, the church "...sent a message of our needs and aims to the Church Extension Board. It responded at once with \$2,000. This gave the church new life and work went forward. We had not gone far when we saw that to complete this building we must ask for an increase in our loan of \$1,000. This made a total of \$3,000 granted the Aubrey church." (Tribble, World Call, 1919, *ibid.*)

Continuing the article, Colby Hall asked, "Is the Aubrey, Texas church worthy of an extra large Church Extension loan, as an outstanding example of an up-to-

date rural church? ... Yes, without hesitation ..." Why? (1) They have used a budget system of finances. ...it will work wonders in the country as well as in the city. (2) They have a local missionary program. They have a missionary budget also, giving for several years half as much for missions as for local work. (3) They have a fine community spirit. ... a spirit of common action and united purpose. (4.) They are now getting an adequate plant. ... [with] such a vision and such a program that they built a house to enlist the whole community and to serve it. (Hall, Colby D. "Example of Country Church and Community Work." World Call, September 1919, p. 32)

The new building, rebuilt of brick and tile, was completed and the opening day was Sunday, June 1, 1919 with W. D. Darnall as the master of ceremonies. T. H. Mathieson of Denton preached the morning and evening message. Following the morning sermon, according to R. R. Tribble, "...the people were asked to give \$3,600 in cash and pledges. Before the day was over, the people had subscribed over \$4,000. The total cost of the new building and furnishings was over \$8,000. We now have a plant well worth \$10,000 with the lot." (Tribble, World Call, 1919. *ibid*)

Although struggling under a large debt, the congregation of Aubrey Christian continued to contribute their share toward the less fortunate. By 1921, the church already had missions in place and was building more. The January 20th Christian Courier quoted R. R. Tribble as follows, "We are already having regular preaching at one of our mission points, Ballew Schoolhouse. Bro. Dickey will soon have four places besides his regular work with Aubrey and Pilot Point."

(Christian Courier, 1921, Vol. XXXIII, #37) And in giving for the church year of 1922, Aubrey showed the following statistics:

"Bible School Enrollment – 125

Offerings to United Society:

Bible School--\$23.98,

Local Missionary Organization - \$16.80

Grand Total of \$40.78."

(Dickey, M. L. Disciples of Christ Yearbook: 1922 Statistical Table - United Budget Offerings 1922)

Growth was reflected in the 1932 report to the Board. In the January issue of the Christian Courier was the following: "Aubrey, Jan 18 – Reported 72 answered roll call. Regular attendance: 35 – 55. ... For the year 1932, we have re-elected our Sunday School officers. (and) This writer was asked to serve his fourth year as acting minister to the congregation – Jerome Moore, Denton."

(Christian Courier, 1932, Vol. XLIV, #20, p. 15)

With a \$3,000 debt, the years 1919-1934 found church members busy with fund-raisers. "After borrowing the \$3,000 from the Church Extension Board in 1918, the church members worked at anything they could find to raise money so they could get the debt paid off. They scoured the area picking up pecans to sell. The Ladies Aid Society held bazaars, made and sold hot tamales and ice cream, and as a major project decided to raise money by making quilt blocks. They paid into the fund a penny for each piece they sewed into their block. Then, after the blocks were put together, the finished quilt was given to the woman who had sewn the most pieces into her block.

"The note was paid off on February 2, 1934. On April 21st, 1934 the certificate of record was filed with the county clerk of Denton County. After the note was filed and recorded, the congregation held a note-burning celebration at the church during the regular 11:00 service." (Mary A. Coffey Reding, Personal Interview, February, 2004)

In an addition to a short history of the church placed in an updated Church Directory, these comments were made. "The role of this church has been to have regular Sunday School and church services for its membership and guests. For many years it has been a training ground for ministerial students from Brite Seminary, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas. In addition to this it has liberally offered its services to the community." (Griffin, Kathryn Hodges, Lily Mildred Hodges, Mary Alice Coffey Reding. Article, 1986) It was through these beliefs the church offered use of some of its land for construction of a community building next door. "In 1953 ... men of the community built the community building primarily [to provide space] for the Belew Cemetery [meetings] and the [community-wide] Thanksgiving Dinner(s) although it is accessible to the entire community throughout the year." (Griffin, Hodges, and Reding, *ibid*)

On November 24, 1991, to honor many of the early members, the congregation held a dedication service in which several names of deceased pioneer members were added to the blank memorial windows. The service (in part) stated, "For the dear friends and kindred ... For the teachers and companions of our childhood and youth and the members of our household of faith who worship You now in heaven ... we dedicate these windows that the sanctity of their wisdom and goodness may rest upon our earthly days ... that we

may be comforted and sustained by a promise of a time when none shall be a stranger and an exile from Your kingdom and household ... " (Window Dedication Service: First Christian Church, 1991)

We believe, in the present and early struggles of the North Texas area to promote well-being and a quality of life, and to make Christian teachings available to its people, the congregation of First Christian Church of Aubrey has contributed greatly. In 2004, this church congregation still stands for the original purposes, and works hard to provide their support on a continuing basis. This is a continuing tribute to that faithful group of loyal Christians who gave so much to establish and maintain a gathering point and influence for good on the citizens of the area.

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Ministers of First Christian Church of Aubrey

1895 – F. L. Young

1896 – '02 – Eugene Holmes and W. M. Reynolds

1903 – '04 – B. F. Faulkner

1905 – '08 – G. M. Morton and E. H. Holmes

1909 – '10 – W. G. Haywood

1911 – F. W. Strong

1912 – '13 – H. Hagameyer

1914 – A. N. Glover

1915 – '17 – A. J. Bush

(Coffey, Brief History and Old Brown Record Book, 1902 to 1915)

1917 – H. A. Smith

1918 – '19 – W. D. Darnall

(Tribble, World Call, 1919, p. 32)

1919 – '20 – A. D. Rodgers

1920 – '22 – M. L. Dickey

1923 – R. W. Robinson

1923 – '25 – J. W. Winn (TCU)

1925 – '26 – C. C. Cockrum

D of C Yearbook : 1920 through D of C Yearbook: 1926)

1927 – '28 – A. K. Scott

1928 – '31 – Jerome Moore

1931 – L. M. Anderson

1932 – '33 – Jerome Moore

1934 – Carter Boren (Student)
1934 – Clayton Potter (Student)
1935 – '36 – J. O. Hussey (Student)
1936 – '37 – G.L. Messinger (Student)
1937 - '39 – Lamar Hocker (Student)
1939-1940 – Jess Moore (Student)
1940-1941 – Lee Romine
1941-1944 – T. C. Pugh (Student)
1944 – '45 – Stanley Hovatter (Student)
1945 - '60 – Homer L. Coffey
1960-1962 – Charles VanBebber (Student)
1963-1966 – Milton Ponds (Student)
1966-1967 – James Pennington (Student)
1967-1969 – Terry Willis (Student)
1969-1970 – Wallace Robinson (Student)
1970-1971 – Robert Carney (Student)
1971 – George Latimer (Student)
1972-1974 – Donald Childers (Student)
1974-1975 – Noel Phillips (Student)
1975-1976 – Dean Reeder (Student)
1976-1977 – Robert L. Holloway (Student)
1977-1979 – David Dickerson (Student)
(Church Records: 1927 to Present)