

This history was put together to the best of our knowledge.

A Brief History Of Thompson Park Church of Christ Coon Rapids Christian Church Andover Christian Church

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For the 50th Anniversary of the Congregation
October 7, 2007

1956

The planning began. We met in the home of a couple that was interested in starting a church. The original group consisted of about six people. We then arranged to rent two small rooms above the Ben Franklin Store, which was located in Anoka. We would rent it for \$5.00 per Sunday. It had a wood stove for heat.

1957 — January

We grew to about 40 members. This congregation had its beginning in Anoka, Minnesota. With Willis (Bill) & Ruth Schmidt as our ministers, a small group of interested persons met above a variety store each Lord's Day for more than two years. Other charter members included Kendall & Fanny Talbot, Loretta Lenz, Miles & Annabell Oberg, Mary Westlund, Lyle & Nona Troutman and Gerald & Marian Gourley.

1960

Gerald Gibson, then a professor at Minnesota Bible College, and his wife Normadeene were called to minister with us on a part-time basis. Many students and faculty members of the Bible College began to attend, as well as additional folks from the community, and it was necessary to move to larger quarters. They wisely chose to move to the rapidly growing northern suburban community of Coon Rapids. They purchased the white church building on Hanson Boulevard, called the Joyce Chapel for \$6,300. They held services there while constructing the new building. The name, Thompson Park Church of Christ, was adopted in anticipation of the move to the new building. The land was on the corner of 115th and Ilex NW, in Coon Rapids, Minnesota.

1961 — August

Ground was broken to build the church building on Ilex Street in Coon Rapids. The church consisted of 60 devoted members.

1962 — November

Construction was completed and the building was dedicated on November 11, 1962. In the beginning, the congregation had a difficult time meeting its financial obligations. It managed to pay for a few months on the bonds sold for building purposes, but the growth was too slow and income was not sufficient. An appeal was made to sister congregations in Minnesota and they responded well through the Minnesota Christian Evangelizing Association.

1963 — Summer

A parsonage was built to the north of the church next to the lot where the administration building was later located. Willard Hockley was the first occupant.

1963 — August

Willard Hockley was called as the first full-time minister. Willard & Florence served the congregation until September 1966.

“As I think about the Coon Rapids church, words come to me like dedication, sacrifice, hard work, love for the Lord, focus and many good times and great fellowship. While many were young couples raising their families — the work of the church was foremost in their minds. They willingly and joyfully sacrificed, worked and prayed for the cause of Christ there. It would be nice if Willard was here to give you much more accurate and detailed accounts, but he was thankful to have worked with such loving and caring people.”

Florence Hockley, wife of Willard Hockley

1965

There were 88 active members.

“When we moved to Coon Rapids, it appeared that the congregation might go under due to the heavy debt load. Willard wrote to the churches of the state and informed them of the situation. The MCEA and the churches responded. They wrote back saying, “Hang in there, we will help.” Praise God! You know the rest of the story and how God has blessed the work and the people at Coon Rapids, and you are still on the move. Thanks to God.”

Willard & Florence Hockley

1967 — January

Bob & Doris Myers accepted the call to be the ministers at Coon Rapids.

“The spirit of the congregation was excellent and we were readily accepted in the role of the minister and family as we settled into the parsonage and began our ministry on January 29th.

Bob Myers

1967

Membership was 69 at this point with about 100 people attending on an average Sunday. The future looks bright for this young congregation, and they are making the impact they started out to make thirteen years ago.

1967

During the first year of Bob Myers' ministry, we had 20 baptisms.

“During our ministry, we had the best of relationships with the eldership and the congregation. We had financial problems but it only increased the determination to keep our spiritual attitudes on the highest of plains.”

Bob Myers

By the middle of February we started our Family Night Study. This immediately caught on as it provided study for every member of the family. We were soon averaging almost as many on Wednesday evenings as in Sunday morning Sunday School.

On October 29, the church celebrated our 10th Anniversary.

1968

The church continued to be involved in state-wide ministry when we hosted the first Minnesota Christian Convention.

“Perhaps lesser known are the contributions the Coon Rapids church made during the 1960’s that affected the other Christian Churches in the area. To get better acquainted with sister churches in the metropolitan area the church instigated softball games among the metro churches that resulted in a full Christian Church league that lasted several years and helped form a closer bond and created close relationships between Coon Rapids and the other churches. Saturdays in warm weather came to mean inter-church games and times of fellowship and camaraderie. The summers ended with all day tournaments. They also asked for and helped form periodic worship services that brought the metro churches together to bond in a general Sunday worship service which was a real morale booster to the smaller churches who seldom saw a large building full of like-worshipping Christians. The first Minnesota State Christian Convention was thought up and held in the Coon Rapids Church to bring together Christians from around the state for the first time. The original thought was to bring together the churches from all over the state to meet and see the people who were being helped by their contributions to maintain a presence in Anoka county. The idea we were selling was that we were doing a good work, needed support and would be a dynamic congregation in the future once we got beyond the early years. The continued success of the State Convention even today reflects the success of that venture. People from around the state also got to know us through the small but steady feed of our graduates who went on to study at Minnesota Bible College.”

Bob Massengill

1970

The name was changed to Coon Rapids Church of Christ in order to be more easily identified by those seeking a church in the area.

1971 — February

From the state of Minnesota, considered by some “a mission field” itself, comes this encouraging report of growth. *“From very humble, meager, and unspectacular beginnings, the Churches of Christ in the Twin Cities and suburban areas have sprung up and grown, most of them within the past fifteen years. But this growth has been the result of vision, patience, prayer and persistence.”*

*Christian Standard
February 14, 1971*

1972

The active membership had grown to nearly 100. After receiving assistance from the MCEA for about 10 years, this is the year the church became self-supporting.

1972

After some restructuring of our debt, we became self-supporting.

“The church saw the importance of church camp at Pine Haven and as a self-supporting congregation we were soon giving regularly for the support of Pine Haven Christian Assembly and paying one half of the camp fees in order to encourage our children to attend camp.”

“The church continued to grow in strength as a congregation although not greatly increasing in membership. The church has a rich heritage of dedicated service to God and has sent many young people to Minnesota Bible College”

Bob Myers

1978 — May

Robert Myers closed his ministry with the church in order to go to Brazil, South America as a missionary. After raising support for the Myers', Bob, Doris and their daughter Margie entered Brazil in March of 1979. Church membership had grown to about 120.

1978 — July

Calvin & Jean Miller moved here to continue the ministry at Coon Rapids.

1982 — April

This church family celebrated its 25th Anniversary. During Jean & Calvin's ministry, our youth competed on Bible Bowl teams, which included competitions at the North American Christian Convention. The youth also put on a number of musical programs and participated at nursing home services. Coon Rapids Church of Christ hosted the state convention, youth rallies and men's meetings during this time as well. Jean Miller directed the "Hanging of the Greens" which required the participation of many within our church in decorating the sanctuary for Christmas. She also directed the annual Easter Cantata.

"In the pictures of the past we see men, women, and children of faith from a prior generation. They are people that were willing to be used by God, to step out in faith, and to fulfill the commission that they had been given by Jesus. Many here would not be in a relationship with God today if it was not for a willingness on the part of these people to step out in faith. And believe me, they had some very tough times — early on this church found themselves carrying a financial burden that plagued them for years. They were years of sacrifice like most of us have never experienced before. By any earthly estimation, this place should have closed their doors and given up. But they didn't — was it because they weren't perfect? Was it because they never made mistakes? Was it because they never felt like giving up on it all? No, it was because they believed in the heritage of faith that was passed down to them, and they wanted to pass it down to the next generation, and the next, and the next, and the next — and that is exactly what they did."

Barry Davis

1982 — October

The original church bell tower was removed.

1988 — November 11

We burned our mortgage for the Coon Rapids Church of Christ. All thanks and glory be to God!

1990

The name was changed to Coon Rapids Christian Church.

Calvin Miller retired as minister, but still contributes to the continuation of the work we have to do.

1990 — September

Kevin & Bonnie White came to Coon Rapids Christian Church after an 11 year ministry at the White Bear Lake Church of Christ.

"The church has always been a "family" church. Several of the founding families basically raised their families together at various church activities. Eventually many of the children who grew up in the church ended up getting married to someone from the church. In addition to being brothers and sisters in Christ they also became related through marriage.

The people of the Coon Rapids Christian Church hold a very special place in our hearts and lives.

Twenty five years ago, on August 19, 1978, Bonnie and I were married at the church. Several life long friendships have been established through the years. Words cannot express the gratitude we feel toward many individuals who ministered to us when our 6 year old son, Timmy, died of cancer in May of 1989.

Fellowship events were plentiful and memorable. I enjoyed the sports ministry in the church: softball, basketball, and numerous golf outings with friends from church.

Kevin White

1996

The administration building was built. This building provided eight additional classrooms.

With growing youth programs, the church needed to add staff. Kim Berggren was hired as a part-time youth director. The Wednesday night program was revamped to include a weekly supper prepared by Letha Roth and Carol Smith. After several part-time youth ministers, Jeremy Allard was hired as our first full time youth minister.

Worship was another area of change during the 90's. We introduced worship teams to lead the congregation in worship. The style changed from traditional hymns to a blended style of hymns and choruses.

1996 — October

The new bell tower was built in memory of Chad Massengill and Jesse Carpenter.

1998 — August

Kevin White ended his ministry here and to begin a ministry with Minnesota Bible College. Jeremy Allard served as interim minister.

Sunday morning attendance averaged 171.

1999 — May

Barry & Robin Davis came to be the next full time ministers.

"In May of 1999 we received and accepted the call to the Coon Rapids Christian Church. To quote Dickens, 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.' It was the best of times, because Coon Rapids Christian Church is filled with great people that want to do the Lord's work and we felt a part of this family from day one. It was the worst of times because we had never been so cold in our lives! In all seriousness, we have had a love affair with CRCC since the day we moved here and look forward to the times yet to come. While I enjoyed my ministries prior to coming to CRCC, this is by far the best experience I have ever had. And the days to come are just going to keep getting better. I anticipate much growth, both spiritually and numerically, as we continue to follow God's will. Since arriving here, I completed my Doctor of Ministry degree at American Christian College and Seminary, I have had the pleasure of ministering to many, many wonderful people, and have been able to join with the rest of the leadership in casting the vision for a future church facility that will help us to obtain the vision that God has given us. God has truly blessed us.

Barry Davis

2000

Sunday morning attendance averaged 223.

We purchased 18 acres of land on South Coon Creek Drive in Andover with the possibility of a future building site.

2001

Lives are being changed. We had 16 baptisms this year.

2002 — September

The Elders set forth a VISION FOR THE FUTURE and we started the Harvestime process. Harvestime is a consulting firm that helps congregations plan to build a new church building. None of us had ever undertaken a project of this size. Harvestime showed us how to break the planning process down into pieces. Leaders stepped forward and teams of church members went to work planning the building of our new church home. Task forces were created, involving over 80 people and included the areas of communication, design, finance, fundraising, furnishings, growth, high tech, land and construction, prayer, programs, sale of old property and moving. This program was vital to our moving process.

2002

Sunday attendance averaged 238.

2003 — November 23

We kicked off our Capital Stewardship Campaign — a fundraising effort for our new building and land. Our goal was \$600,000. As of October 3, 2007, a little more than 80% of that goal has been met with funds still being contributed. We celebrated God's faithfulness through His people with a celebration dessert in January of 2007.

2004

From January to June of 2004, office space was rented on University Avenue. The offices were moved while our building was in the process of being sold.

The church family was kept busy this year with the move to our new building in Andover. Our Harvestime committees (established in 2002) were busy completing the Harvestime process.

The Holy Grounds Café was opened, our foyer was finally large enough to accommodate many, many people, the gardening club began, and we set aside time frequently to pray in our prayer chapel.

2005

We sold the land we purchased in 2000 to help reduce our mortgage.

2006 — March

Twenty people represented ACC on a mission trip to Mexico. They built a two room house, working with CASAS por CRISTO (Houses for Christ) and missionaries Ed & Donna Weckerly.

2006 — May

Barry & Robin Davis ended their ministry at Andover and moved to Lexington, Kentucky.

2006 — August

Jim & Peggy Conner were called to become our interim ministers and became our full time ministers in January of 2007.

2007 — October

We are celebrating our 50th Anniversary. God is faithful!

History of Elders

This list is based on the official record of annual meetings. The dates listed are the first time an individual was elected as an Elder. Many were reelected in later years.

- 1960 Jerry Gourley
Miles Oberg
Lyle Troutman
- 1961 Dick Chulyak (Chair of congregation – not an Elder)
Ernie Wise
Leonne Worcester
Robert Taylor
- 1967 Bob Massengill
Harry Judd
- 1969 David Roth
Miles Oberg, Jr.
- 1974 Ron Steward
- 1977 Vic Berggren
- 1981 Dale Rumsey
- 1982 Del Howe
Bill Lund
Joe Wilson
- 1983 Calvin Sheeder
- 1985 David Miller
- 1986 John Fordyce
- 1991 Marv Christensen
Charlie Myers
- 1993 Earl Blevins
Brian Pease
- 1994 Lonnie Robertson
- 2001 Steve Davis
- 2003 George Cornell
Rick Lund
- 2004 Arvin Wilson
- 2006 Brent Adams

Senior Ministers:

Bill Schmidt 1957-1959
Jerry Gibson 1959-1962
Willard Hockley 1962-1966
(first full time minister)
Bob Myers 1967-1978
Calvin Miller 1978-1990
Kevin White 1990-1998
Jeremy Allard 1998-1999
Barry Davis 1999-2006
Jim Conner 2006 - Present

Youth Ministers:

Jerry & Joyce Albert
(Jerry was ordained into the ministry at CRCC)
Fern McNamee
Lee Shelton
Kim Berggren
Toni Singer
Lisa Fernelius
Robert Blanchard
Matt Branum
Jeremy Allard
Tracy Silva (Intern)
Celeste Ecklund
Bryan White (Intern)
Tim Thorman (Intern)

Worship Ministers:

Kim Berggren
Amy Ayash