

THE CHURCH'S EARLY HISTORY

[The following was written for the church's 60th anniversary celebration in 1961. It is reproduced here as written.]

The early church history is similar to that of other pioneer communities. The circuit minister held services in the most convenient places, generally the school house. A log school house was built in 1846 a short distance from Dukes' Cemetery. Church Service was held here until the Brooks Point School was built in 1870. Two denominations, the Presbyterians and the Methodists, had united for these services. These people who met at Brooks Point School purchased a lot on the corner of West Main and Scott streets, erected their edifice in 1876 and dedicated on the 19 of February 1877. The church was known as the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. It was a church for a farming community. The population of Westville began to grow in 1890 with the opening of the coal mines. The new residents growing in number crowded into the only church in town. Some of these people were not contented.

Rev. James Hayes, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Danville and a Missionary Minister, took great interest in the Westville Community. Traveling in a "Gospel Wagon" which contained a small organ, hymn books, and religious matter, Rev. Hayes traveled to the Westville Community, preaching and spreading the Gospel. A Sunday School was opened in Kellyville in the home of a young woman named Minnie Hutton (Mrs. Mouris Murphy). Mrs. Jack Flanery also opened her home for a Sunday School a little later.

An Ecclesiastical Council was called, meeting April 12, 1901, to consider a proposal by a number of people in Westville that a church be organized in Westville and to "become associated as a Congregational Church."

Ministers and delegates assembled re[presenting the Paxton and South Danville Congregational Churches. The ministers and delegates from the Champaign and Loda Churches were unable to attend. The council met in a carpenter shop on Cook Street in Westville that afternoon. The council "voted to approve the articles of faith, covenant and constitution known as Tompkins Manual." The council also voted "to proceed to perfect the organization of the church and to conduct the recognition service."

The recognition service was held in the evening of the same day in the Presbyterian Church building in Westville. The complete record may be found in the Record Book of the Westville Church, Book # 1, 1901-1908. Twenty-six names were presented in connection with the perfecting of that organization as follows: Rev. James Hayes, Mrs. Eliza Hayes, Ellen Hayes, Emma Hayes, Blanch Hayes, Samuel Brockhouse, Ann Brockhouse, Isreal Brockhouse, Geo. W. Smith, Ethel Smith, Maud Brockhouse, John A. Boyer, Florence Boyer, Clara Snedden, Mary J. Chapman, J. T. Bailey, Mrs. J. T. Bailey, Catherine Chapman, Wm. Brinkley, Mrs. Thomas Cokely, Lula Ellsworth, Archie McDonald, Mrs. James McDonald, Mrs. Elizabeth Chapman, E. S. Ward, and James Webb. Also present were Rev. A. Monroe of Paxton, Rev. C. A. Bruiner of South Danville, Rev. James Tomkins, D.D., Rev. W. F. McMillan, and Rev. James Hayes. Rev. Monroe served as moderator of the Council and Rev. McMillan served as scribe.

On 27 April 1901 the first officers were elected in the home of Samuel Brockhouse as follows: deacons, Wm. Boyer, James Bailey, and Sam Brockhouse; trustees, George Smith, Richard Snedden, and

James Bailey; treasurer, George Smith; clerk, Mrs. Tom Coakely. It was resolved at this meeting that they name the church The Congregational Church of Westville.

On June 25, 1902, plans were made at the home of Mrs. Tom Coakley to buy ground and start to build the church. A lot was bought at the corner of West and Williams Streets. They started to dig the basement when the men decided that a lot on State Street would be a better location. A committee of George Smith, James Bailey, and Richard Snedden asked Michel Kelly for a donation. He gave them the lot on the corner of Short and State Streets with the understanding that it would cost \$3000 or more and it would be completed by February 1, 1905, paying all taxes on said property, and if all these conditions are not met the church would pay Kelly \$500 for the property.

It was a big task to finance the building of our church, but there were many hard working people donating labor and money and making possible the completion of the church in August of 1904. The opening of the church was a great day and there was not room enough for the many members and friends who came for the opening. The Sunday School was among the largest in the county.

A Rev. Smith came with Rev. Hayes to get the Sunday School and church people organized. Rev. Robert K. Atkinson was called as the regular minister, September 15, 1904. It was under his pastorate that the church was dedicated with very impressive services which were held on January 21, 1906.

Pastors throughout the past fifty years have been Rev. James Hayes, C. A. Bruiner, Robert Atkinson, Otto F. Mueller, C. L. Mills, J. R. Lewis, Thomas Armstrong, James O. Fischer, Zoltan Irshay, George Guild, Mr. Norfleet, Arve K. Johnson, Thomas Lineweaver, Peter Ivison, Cjas Fausnacht, and C. R. Dierlamm.

Two ministers have been ordained in the church, Rev. R. K. Atkinson on January 22, 1906, and Rev. Zoltan Irshay, a Presbyterian, in 1920. Rev. Arve K. Johnson has the longest term of service—from April 1927 until October 1940. Miss Hallie Magill served the church and community from 1920 to 1942. She opened the first library and kindergarten in Westville.

The present pastor is Rev. William Wiggins who began his pastorate here on April 8, 1953.

During the last 60 years the Lord has blessed the congregation and its pastors who through the years have administered the sacraments and teaching of the gospel.

Another great chapter is being added to the history of our church in Westville. On December 4, 1960, ground breaking ceremonies were held for a new church building which is now being constructed.

Today, April 16, 1960, we raise our hearts and hands to give honor and glory to the Lord and Join David in saying, *"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come to thee, and thou reignest over all; and thine hand is power and might; and thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength to all."*

"Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name."

Pastors Who Have Served This Congregation

The Congregational Church, Westville, Illinois

Robert Atkinson	1904-1907
James Hayes	
C. A. Bruiner	
Otto F. Mueller	1907-1908
C. L. Mills	1908-1911
J. R. Lewis	1913-1915
Thomas Armstrong	1915-1917
James O. Fischer	1917-1920
Zoltan Irshay	1920-1923
Mr. Norfleet	1923-1925
George E. Guild	1925-1926
Arve K. Johnson	1927-1939
T. M. Lineweaver	1939-1941
Peter Ivison	1942-1943
Charles Fausnacht	1944-1946
C. R. Dierlamn	1946-1950
William D. Wiggins	1951-1964

Trinity United Church of Christ, Westville, Illinois

William D. Wiggins	departed 1964
J. E. Seilers	1964-1969
N. E. Escott	1970-1973
L. H. Bunger	1973-1974
F. E. Sanstchi	1974-1976
Dale Rosenberger	1980-1984
B. Seeley	1985-1992
Phil Jackson	1993-2005
Deborah Owen	2005-2006
Bill Capel	2006-2007
Connie Tapp Bandy	2007-