

## North Waverly Chapel

1985 – 1995

The Centennial theme “Touch Your People Again” reminds that North Waverly Chapel has been touching the people of this valley for over 100 years.

During the years immediately following the Civil War there was existing on the banks of Shepard Creek in this North Waverly area, a very busy and productive paper mill. The mill employed many workers and a sizable community sprung up as a result. There were people of varying religious denominations but they were united in their belief in God and recognizing the need to nourish that belief they met in one another’s homes for weekly prayer services and Sunday observances. Eventually a simple structure was built for a house of worship on land donated by the Shepard family and a Sunday School was organized in 1874 with John Osborn, a mill employee as its superintendent. Much of the financing of this venture came from the efforts of a very active Ladies Aid Society.

In April of 1895, the male members of this congregation met and elected seven trustees who proceeded to draw up an Act of Incorporation, which clearly states their purpose to found and continue a religious society to be known as the Union Christian Alliance of the Town of Barton. Quoting from the original document, “this society which shall consist of the members of the vicinity worshipping and contributing to the maintenance of the same and conscientiously subscribe in the belief of a Triune God and who desires to spread the influence of good morals and the Christian religion as taught in the Holy Bible and agreed by the Christian Alliance”.

Those seven men who affixed their signatures to this document were A.H. Barrows, William H. Cortright, A.J. DeWitt, Charles Hoyt, J.F. Hoyt, George F. Lyon, and J.H. Tozer.

Although the mill ran into financial difficulties and closed in 1876, the church was still in operation having been rebuilt once after being destroyed in a wind storm. In 1913, it was decided to build a new worship center. Through subscription from various organizations and people of the Valley, and once again, through supreme efforts of the Ladies Aid Society the new Chapel was erected and dedicated on June 10, 1914. The first pastor was Mr. Martin, followed by a Mr. Travis, and then by a succession of part-time pastors who were also serving other Waverly Churches.

In 1933, the Rev. Judd L. Hunter began conducting the service at the Chapel, which had been renamed in 1921 and was known as the Community Church of North Waverly. In addition to his duties at this church, he pastored Emory Chapel in Ellistown and the Dry Brook Church in the Chemung area. He also had a regular job as a rural mail carrier. When services were discontinued at Emory Chapel and Dry Brook Church many of the adherents chose to come to North Waverly.

By 1951, it was evident that more space was needed to accommodate the growing congregation and an addition was erected in 1952.

After 25 years of services, Rev. Hunter announced his retirement and although he left the pulpit, he and Mrs. Hunter remained active in Christian service “doing the work he loved he best - helping the individual”.

At Rev. Hunter's retirement, his son-in-law, Rev. David Noel, became pastor and it was necessary to affiliate with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, but to remain essentially non-denominational in accordance with the original purpose of the founding fathers.

In 1959, the house and property adjoining the church was purchased from Mr. and Mrs. John Prest for use as a parsonage. The Noels moved in and that summer the house was also used for Daily Vacation Bible classes. That same year the church underwent another change, i.e. "The Union Christian Alliance, otherwise known as North Waverly Chapel".

In 1960, Rev. Noel resigned and Rev. William Wells was called to be pastor. At that time, due to an increase in attendance, it became necessary to have two morning worship services. It was soon evident that a new building was needed and eventually ground was broken on May 29, 1963 to that purpose. In due course, the new Chapel was completed and dedicated on March 8, 1964. The old Chapel was named Hunter Hall in honor of Rev. Hunter and was used for special meetings and Daily Vacation Bible classes and Sunday School classes. It was a well-known landmark until it was razed in June of 1991. From this old edifice the bell was salvaged as were the stained glass windows. But the efforts to preserve the inscribed stone in the front of the building were thwarted when it broke, it being of a shaly consistence. When it was placed as a step stone at the entrance of Hunter Hall, it was inscribed "God be merciful unto us and bless us". It was given by Cyrus Bogart from his quarry located at that time in the area of the present-day Fraley's Danceland.

As Pastor Wells' work load increased it was deemed wise to find some help for him. Paul Clark was hired as director of Christian Education in 1977. At his resignation in September, 1979, a search led to the hiring of Lynn Wheeler in June of 1980. He had the title of Assistant to

the Pastor and it was in 1982 that he and Jim Wells, son of the current pastor, were among others ordained at the district conference hosted by North Waverly Chapel.

Already plans were in progress for an addition to the Chapel – plans for a large all-purpose room, kitchen, library and two pastors' studies. Beneath would be a nursery and five Sunday School rooms. These plans, at an approximate cost of \$250,000, were approved in April of 1983. The ground breaking was held a year later and the finished building was dedicated in June of 1985.

In June of 1984, Pastor Wheeler resigned and Jonathon Ritchey came to carry on the job the following year, July, 1985. The Ritcheys left in August 1989 to go to the mission field and Thomas Hawkins was hired to the position in September of that same year. Also that year, the mortgage of the new addition was paid off and once again the Chapel was debt-free.

In 1990, a picnic pavilion was built in the wooded area south of the parsonage and this was duly named the Cheresnowsky Memorial Parke. This is used for Daily Vacation Bible School classes, annual and special picnics and is available to members of the congregation for family get-togethers. In July of 1990, a well-attended homecoming picnic was held there.

During the period of November 1991 through March 1992, the library was completely renovated under the direction of Beverly Hawkins, wife of Assistant Pastor Tom. This has become a pleasant room in which many interesting Christian volumes are offered: fiction, non-fiction, reference works, not to mention several versions of the Holy Bible and commentaries, for all ages – young children, teens and adults. A growing collection of videos is also to be found there.

In January of 1992, the Fellowship Hall rang with the sound of foreign voices as 35 young Russian performers were treated to an evening of good food, music and fellowship in a hall filled to capacity by a hospitable church family. A Bible printed in the Russian language was presented to each guest, this in a time period preceding Russia's more recently won "freedom".

There was a growing concern that the Chapel was not adequately meeting the needs of the youth in the congregation and with this in mind the membership approved the hiring of a Youth Pastor. Jeff Crosby was accepted to fill that position in 1992 and the young people have been involved in several worthy projects.

Once again, in August of 1994, the Chapel family was forced to say goodbye to the Assistant Pastor as the Hawkins family left for the mission field.

By limitation of space this history has spent few paragraphs on the contributions these assistants made to the church body. There is no question in the minds of this congregation that each had a special gift, freely given, which touched the hearts of the community in a mighty way.

One could go on and on with endless lists of names of people touching people in an effective ministry of the Chapel. Besides the pastors and assistants, are the music leaders and talented musicians, the Sunday School superintendents and teachers, the missionary board, the elders and governing board, various committee members, junior church leaders, nursery workers, Daily Vacation Bible School directors and workers – many outstanding and gifted people down over the years. But again, space will not permit such a listing so suffice it to say that the Chapel for over 100 years, has been blessed with a congregation of loving, giving people. And it continues to grow and to stand firm on its biblical base and its program of support for worldwide missions.

