

Mifflin Presbyterian CHURCH HISTORY

Presbyterian services were held in the vicinity of Gahanna as early as 1819, but no effort was made to organize a congregation until 1840 when Nathaniel Harris submitted to Presbytery a petition from 21 persons in Mifflin Township requesting the establishment of a church here.

John Clark, the founder of Gahanna, gave the congregation the present lot on which the first building was erected in 1844. At the time the congregation was organized, it was not financially able to call a pastor, and for several years it depended upon stated supplies appointed by Presbytery.

The first to be sent was Reverend Highland Hibbard of the Columbus Presbytery who served as supply minister until the Church was able to call Reverend Ebenezer Washburn, a professor at Central College and pastor of the Blendon or Westerville Church. He was installed on May 30, 1852 and became the first minister of Mifflin Church on a half-time basis. He remained as pastor until October 1859. During his ministry, the Columbus Presbytery met in the Mifflin Church for the first time.

Reverend J. C. Tidball served as supply minister until he was installed as a regular pastor on October 29, 1861. Reverend Tidball, who ministered until 1864, presented the first set of Hymnals, including the music, to the Church. Following his departure, Reverend J. W. Baldwin served as supply minister followed by others. From 1870 to 1876, the Church had no pastor due to a shortage of pastors in the Columbus Presbytery. Religious interest was at a low following the Civil War and the Church received only two new members in six years.

In 1876, Mifflin and Reynoldsburg churches extended a call to Reverend William E. Mack. It was during this pastorate that the Women's Ministry Society was organized. At the end of two years, the Church was without a pastor until 1882 when Reverend Charles Lee, a native of Central College, was appointed to supply. At the end of that time, he became a pastor and served two more years. During this time, a Board of Deacons was established. The first Deacons to be ordained were Adelbert Miller and George Shull.

Reverend John F. Horton served as pastor from 1893-1895. In January and February 1893, Reverend Charles Wallace conducted evangelistic services and over 50 persons united with the Church. Following Reverend Horton in 1895, Reverend William Baker became the regular pastor. It was during his pastorate that the old church building was moved to the rear and a new sanctuary added to the front and dedicated on December 27, 1896. The beautiful Tiffany Window that was built on the north end and those windows on the east and west side of the new Sanctuary were given as memorials in 1896. These were retained in the construction of the new edifice that was dedicated in 1956.

Reverend Charles Hempstead was called in 1899 and served until 1902. The Church was without a pastor for a while but Presbytery sent out supplies and membership began to grow again.

In October 1906, the Reverend B. Frank Jacobs was called to the joint congregation of Reynoldsburg and Mifflin and Blacklick. During his ministry in the Mifflin Church, the membership increased nearly two fold and the Sunday School advanced from 80 to 149. The Board of Elders was increased from three to five, and a Financial Board and Music Committee were appointed.

During Reverend Currie's pastorate, 1913-1917, there were reported 91 communicant members and Sunday School enrollment of 150. Seven sons of Mifflin Church were conscripted for military service (all went overseas and returned).

In 1918, Dr. John A. Ewalt came to Mifflin. He served nine years. During the early part of his pastorate, the manse west of the Church was purchased. It was formerly the home of James McKillin, a member of the Church. It was used as a manse and for Church School classes until it was torn down in March 1961. Dr. Ewalt, at the age of 81, delivered the Baccalaureate address to the high school on May 15, 1927, then departed the next morning for the General Assembly at San Francisco where he passed away three weeks later. Six months after the death of Dr. Ewalt, Reverend Ralph W. Illingworth was installed Pastor of Mifflin Church in 1928. He remained until 1931, when he resigned to accept a call to the Johnstown Church from which he had come.

There was a steady growth in membership and excellent conditions until the depression of 1929. In 1932, Reverend Philip L. Williams came to Mifflin Church. Statistical reports indicated a steady growth in membership and also a prosperous financial condition until the World War affected the resources of Church support.

Dr. D.W. MacLeod became the minister of the Church from 1936-1944. The interior of the Church was redecorated, a new Hammond organ was purchased, and Boy Scout Troop #128 became a reality.

By 1945, when many new homes were being built, Reverend Benjamin F. Judd, Jr. accepted the call. The growth of the Church School demanded more space, so a stone wing 36 ft. x 46 ft. with three rooms on the first floor and two rooms in the basement were built.

The Adelle Latta Circle and Men's Fellowship were organized. In 1949, Reverend Judd accepted a call to a larger pastorate, and Reverend George F. Mace accepted a call to the Mifflin congregation. Membership by 1955 had reached 519 and the Church School had an enrollment of over 250. From 1948-1958, the Church sponsored a preschool kindergarten. To meet the needs of an ever-expanding community and congregation, the Church accepted the challenge to build a new main sanctuary and educational facilities. The old Church was torn down in April 1956, and the new building was started in May.

It was completed in October and dedicated in December. Reverend Mace left Gahanna in February 1960 to accept a call in Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

Reverend Nicholas B. Bosworth became pastor of the congregation in April 1960. He was active in civic affairs and an instrument in forming a Ministerial Association in Gahanna. A three-manual Allen organ was purchased and installed. After Reverend Bosworth's service was completed in April 1964, the Church was served by Reverend D. A. J. Wold as Interim Pastor until the Church called the Reverend Donald D. Swift from Erie, Pennsylvania, in the fall of 1964.

The congregation took progressive steps during Reverend Swift's pastorate. Improvements were made in the physical plant, including a new rear entrance, new kitchen facilities, chancel area changes, and interior redecorating. A private home two lots east of the Church building was acquired and remodeled to house church offices and some Church School facilities, including a teen center room. The land between the Church building and the newly acquired "Church House" was blacktopped to provide much needed off-street parking. A park was developed at the rear of the Church House.

The Mifflin Church was well known in the community for its music program. The Reverend Curtis Miller served as Assistant Pastor for the youth and was subsequently called as the Associate Pastor. He expanded the Christian Education program and coordinated it with the music program. Reverend Miller left to accept a call from a church in Cincinnati. Seminary Intern Newton Kerney succeeded him. He was followed by another Seminary Intern, Mark Fetter, who began working with the youth in the fall of 1975. Seminary Intern Bradley Phillips was employed in the fall of 1976 and continued his work with junior and senior high youth until August 31, 1977.

Interim Pastor Reverend Glen C. Shaffer, who had served the Church for a brief period several years earlier, followed Reverend Swift. On April 17, 1977, when the congregation voted to call the Reverend John J. Manos, it also voted to call Reverend Shaffer as Pastor Emeritus. Reverend Manos began his ministry as pastor on May 9, 1977. He came to Mifflin Church from Second United Presbyterian Church of Knoxville, Tennessee, where he had served as the Evangelism Pastor since 1970.

The first Youth Cantata was formed in 1978. They traveled up and down the eastern United States and as far west as St. Louis, Missouri, and as far north as Toronto, Canada. Several hundred of our youth as well as other youth from the community were touched through the years by this wonderful program.

In early 1988, a new Rogers Westminster organ was purchased to replace the Allen organ. During the latter part of the 1980's, Gahanna again began to experience accelerated growth and by 1988 it was apparent that Mifflin Presbyterian would need a larger facility to minister to the needs of a fast-growing community. In June 1989, the congregation approved a building program with a scheduled completion date of October 1990. The construction process was completed, and the Church was blessed with the

wonderful Kidd Memorial Fellowship Hall and new classroom facilities, which gave new impetus to Church School activities.

Following the retirement of Pastor Manos, the Church was served by interim pastors Douglas Orbaker and Donald Pendell until the Congregation called Reverend Doctor Roger G. Wagner to be the full-time pastor. He began work on May 15, 1995.

Pastor Manos was elected to the position of Pastor Emeritus in December 1995, and began calling on those whose access to the Church was limited. The church's continued growth and the need for a full-time associate pastor led to the call of Reverend George Bendall, Jr. on July 1, 1997. Pastor Bendall left to accept a call to pastor at Teays Valley Presbyterian Church in West Virginia on July 15, 2001.

On July 1, 2002, Reverend Ronald Lokhorst began serving Mifflin Presbyterian Church as Pastor of Visitation. Stephanie H. Boaz became Associate Pastor on September 18, 2002.

Under the capable leadership of Dr. Wagner, Mifflin became well aware of the U.S. Civil War and with the assistance of Associate Pastor Bendall and later Pastor Boaz, the church grew in terms of programs conducted and staff employed. The LOGOS program attracted young people from all areas of Gahanna and was a centerpiece of children's activity. The youth mission trips gave Mifflin youth, as well as those from other churches, the opportunity for service and travel.

After a successful ministry, Dr. Wagner retired on September 10, 2005, to return to Pennsylvania to be nearer his parents and family. Mifflin Church was served by Reverend Alexander McDougall as an Interim Pastor while a Pastor Nominating Committee searched for a permanent replacement. In August 2007, Reverend Peter Dembroski was selected as the new pastor at Mifflin. Reverend Dembroski and Reverend Boaz continued to minister to the congregation, and Reverend Lokhorst left us.

The church acquired all of the property west of the present building with exception of the property at the intersection of S. High St and Granville St. The property was cleared and served as parkland.

Reverend Boaz left us at the end of December 2011 to move out of state with her husband and family. Mifflin began a search for her replacement, but the process was terminated upon the resignation of Pastor Dembroski in August 2012. A more detailed search was needed for calling a new Head of Staff. Reverend Nancy Carle began service as an Interim Pastor in September 2012. Tiffany McCafferty served as a seminary intern in 2013-2014. David Bubb was called as the new pastor of Mifflin in August 2014.

In bringing this brief history of the Mifflin Presbyterian Church to a close, it should be said that the church has had an active and vital role in this community, as its members have made their witness in their daily lives and work.