

I. History of the Ethridge Church

The Ethridge church began in the spring of 1866, organized by James W. Locke, a Giles County preacher of the gospel who had purchased a farm in the Liberty community just south of Ethridge. He along with two other men, Hugh Carothers and H. P. Blake, served as the first elders. The congregation met in a log schoolhouse at Liberty and was simply called the Christian Church. The church membership was divided in their loyalties to the North and South during the bitterly fought Civil War. Locke was a Union sympathizer who owned no slaves; Carothers was a Southern supporter who had owned thirteen slaves. However, through the grace of God the two sides came together after the close of the war to worship at Liberty with a membership of 57 believers.

In 1889 a surge in membership led to the construction of a wood clapboard meetinghouse at the intersection of North Church St. (Brace Road) and Main Street (Ethridge-Redhill Road) in Ethridge, also called Wayne Station at that time. The Ethridge church settled on the name Church of Christ, rather than Christian Church or Disciples of Christ (all commonly used in the early years). At this time, the church faced its first crisis of faith over the issue of instrumental music when a newly appointed elder, George Gallimore, advocated for an organ to be used in worship. Gallimore had recently moved from Ohio where instruments were common. The suggestion was vehemently opposed by the North family: Ira Jr., Lucas, and Joseph. Gallimore and his wife continued to worship at Ethridge where she served as sexton.

Many local citizens continued to be baptized, including 35 at one gospel meeting in 1936. This necessitated the construction of a new concrete block structure on the same lot as the clapboard building. A preacher's home was erected in 1945 adjacent to the meetinghouse. Among the full-time preachers who lived there were Delton Porter, M. F. Norwood, Stanley Brewer, Charles R. Brewer, Jerry Corlew, and Ken Chambers. The Ethridge church also was the home congregation of Ira North who later became the minister of the largest Church of Christ in existence during the last half of the 20th Century in Madison, TN. Ira North returned multiple times to hold gospel meetings; other evangelists included Tom Holland, Jack Wilhelm, and Basil Overton. During the late 1950s and 60s the world-wide split of congregations over the use of monies collected by the church became the second threat to the unity of the church at Ethridge, but its elders held firm.

Again, the membership threatened to overflow the worship facilities, and the present house of worship was constructed in 1975 on Hwy 43 at the Ethridge-Redhill Road intersection. Growth has continued since that date necessitating the construction of a brick and metal Family Life Center in 1987 adjacent to the main building. This structure allowed for the enlargement of classrooms in the main building, as well as providing more classrooms, a larger place for fellowship, and office spaces for ministers and staff. The FLC was renovated in 2013 due to the continued growth of the congregation during the first quarter of the 21st Century.

Source: Sara Dolly Leighton, *History of the Ethridge Church of Christ*, 22 May 2016, pp. 3-51. Copies available at ECOC office and Lawrence County Archives.