

II. History of Missions & Benevolence

The Ethridge church was the second congregation established in Lawrence County and from the start, it has been a benevolent and evangelistic church. Not only did the congregation in its early days help needy individuals in the local community and surrounding area, it also sent support to aid in the planting of other congregations in Tennessee and Alabama. With the construction of the newest facility in the 1970s, however, new opportunities in evangelizing became available through the “Joy Bus” program. Hundreds of children were brought to worship and to Sunday School classes and in the evenings to a Children’s Bible Hour for ages 5 through 14. Three buses ran routes in Lawrenceburg and Ethridge with teens and young adults aboard to teach the children in transit. On Saturdays, the children’s homes were visited and parents were encouraged to attend as well. Some of the children in this evangelistic outreach attend Ethridge today as adults with their families.

Meanwhile, Ethridge participated in foreign missions primarily in Asia and Africa, with special emphasis on India and Vietnam. Ethridge supported full-time native preachers in five of thirteen districts of India. Several Ethridge members traveled to India each year to encourage the native preachers and to establish a preacher’s school. An Ethridge Mission Committee was formed to distribute funds to workers in 19 foreign countries. In the United States, Ethridge formed a particular bond with the Mobile AL Inner City Church. Teens conducted VBS in Mobile and in Aruba as well as in other struggling churches in the U.S. A ladies’ group from Ethridge conducted a three-day Ladies’ Retreat in Mobile three consecutive years and then hosted the Inner City ladies in their homes in Ethridge.

Ethridge was given an extra opportunity at evangelism through benevolence in 1995 when an F5 tornado went through Lawrence County and Ethridge causing death and extensive destruction. The gymnasium of the FLC became the local distribution center for both food and household items from Churches of Christ Disaster Relief in Nashville, including large appliances. Members of the church helped clear debris with chain saws, pitchforks, and pickup trucks.

Ethridge continues to be involved in evangelism through benevolence with Community Day, established in 2009, when the door is open to anyone to attend a devotional, eat a meal together, and take home a sack of groceries and supplies. Members also support Christmas Boxes for children in Honduras, a Walk for Water program, C of C Disaster Relief in Nashville, as well as “adopting” a local family with children at Christmas. Other media evangelistic efforts receive regular contributions from the congregation as well.

Source: Sara Dolly Leighton, *History of the Ethridge Church of Christ*, 22 May 2016, pp. 61-77, 129-30. Copies available at ECOC office and Lawrence County Archives.