

IMAGES

. . . then and now

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge
1861

The Indian Hill Church: The Founding Years

Innovative and ecumenical would best describe the formal organization fifty years ago of The Indian Hill Church. The weekend of November 22-23 will mark the event, with a Founders' Dinner honoring the initial church families on Saturday, and a Ceremonial Commemoration on Sunday.



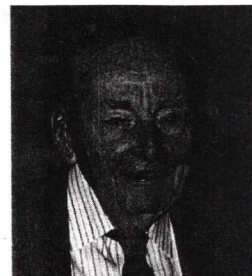
Since 1831 Indian Hill residents have worshipped at the Armstrong Chapel of the Methodist Church. In the 1920's and '30's many newcomers moving to Indian Hill were affiliated with Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches in downtown Cincinnati—an impractical weekly trip for services and Sunday School. Rather than take her children to town for Christian education, Mrs. John Pogue started a Sunday School in her basement on south Drake Rd, with thirty children attending regularly from both Episcopal and Presbyterian families.

Responding to a common desire to hold services "on the hill," Mr. & Mrs. Charles Jones held a meeting at their home early in 1933, to discuss the possibility with their friends. A group of forty persons voiced their support for this idea and made an arrangement with the Methodist Armstrong Chapel to hold Vespers Services there. The first Vespers service was held February 26, and thus began combined Village worship of Episcopalians and Presbyterians. Those Sunday services were attended by families and featured simplicity and brevity. Children participated by taking up the collection, and Mrs. Pogue voluntarily played the organ for 16 years. (She was known to walk from her house to the Chapel to practice hymn selections which the minister had sung to her over the telephone.) Informality reigned as some members attended in their riding clothes, leaving their horses tied up outside.

Joint Vespers services led by clergy from downtown Cincinnati continued as the population of Indian Hill increased. After World War II (during which Mrs. Stanley Rowe's Carrier Pigeon chat sheet was sent to all servicemen who were members of the congregation), a steering committee urged the creation of a "united church under the joint sponsorship of the Cincinnati Presbytery and the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, and open to all Christian people."

In 1946 the entire Vespers service congregation met at Cincinnati Country Day School, and a governing board was appointed. The Rev. John Harris was called to be the first full-time minister to the new parish, and over the next year two separate churches (Episcopal and Presbyterian) were formally organized and federated with each other. Church membership and policy were decided by each denomination, but property was vested in a corporation of which both churches were members. A provision was made whereby individuals could join the Indian Hill Church without choosing a denomination. Thus was created a unique church, one of the first such ecumenical churches in the country.

Community support for the founding Indian Hill Church was strong. The first Every Member Canvass (1947) resulted in an large increase in contributions as the number of contributors rose from 30 to 120. The year 1948 saw the purchase of eight acres of land to construct a new church and also the resignation of Mr. Harris. The congregation was served by visiting clergy for one year, and in 1949 the Rev. Luther Tucker (Episcopalian) became the minister. A Building Fund Drive led to groundbreaking in 1951; and dedication of the new church on Thanksgiving Day, 1952, was attended by 360 worshippers sitting on temporary chairs on a bare concrete slab floor. Team ministry of the two denominations began with Presbyterian Wilmina Rowland.



Over the past five decades the Church has grown—guided by cooperation, compromise, and the Christian spirit. At this historic fiftieth anniversary, its ecumenical roots, pioneering vision, and inclusiveness have marked the Indian Hill Church as a vital part of life in the Village.