
PATHWAY

A WESLEYAN CHURCH

Church History

Contents

Brief History

Our own Church Building

West Berlin separates from Clarksville

Hinderleider School House

The Wesleyan Church

Church Building Addition

Decess/Tucker Ball Field

Further Addition

Ebenezer Center

Outdoor Play Area

Children's Ministry

Mold

Gateway Church Closes

The Bridge merger

Pathway, a Wesleyan Church

Our Pastoral Staff Grows

OUR HISTORY

1896

The present day Pathway church, located on the corners of Bliss and Portland Road, was an outgrowth of a two week revival led February 2-16, 1896

1902

The West Berlin Wesleyan Church building was erected for a grand total of \$1500 including furnishings. Sheds for horses, buggies and wagons were also built.

2008

The Ebenezer Center was dedicated after a building committee was formed in 1995.

2015

One local church closed, another lost their building. These congregations joined and merged with West Berlin Wesleyan Church.

2016

In the spirit of unity, the church decided on the new name, Pathway a Wesleyan Church

2018

Pastoral staff growth. Pathway added an Assistant Pastor, a year later, added a Youth Pastor.

A brief history

See our detailed history by following the link on the Appendix page

A Brief History of Pathway

The present day Pathway church, located on the corners of Bliss and Portland Road, was an outgrowth of a two week revival led February 2-16, 1896 by the Wesleyan Methodist pastor from Clarksville. In March 1896, the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Clarksville invited West Berlin Wesleyan Methodist Class to join them as a Charge. Thus, our first pastor was Reverend and Mrs. R. Thompson who served us for one year, 1896 - 1897. (A complete list of our pastors can be found at the end of this history.) In those early days, the church met in the Hinderleider School house.

OUR OWN CHURCH BUILDING

In April of 1902, Benjamin and Eliza Butler sold a half acre of land to the Michigan Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection for fifty dollars. In April or May of 1902, we began construction of the church building. There was an article in The Advertiser stating that : "The Wesleyan Methodist Society will build a church near Doris (a no-longer-existent town whose post office was located diagonally across the road from the church building)."

The new West Berlin Wesleyan Church Building was dedicated on November 30, 1902 at a cost of \$1500. This included the furnishings which included the Oak Pulpit and twenty Oak Pews, the alcove , rostrum and aisles were neatly carpeted and there were two chandeliers for lighting. At this time sheds for the horses, buggies and wagons were also erected.

WEST BERLIN SEPARATES FROM CLARKSVILLE

On August 19, 1963 the Michigan Conference gave permission for the division of the Clarksville Charge. What had been one church would now become two separate churches. Clarksville Wesleyan Methodist Church was one and the other was the West Berlin Wesleyan Methodist Church.

In the fall of 1963 we began the building of our parsonage. It was completed and ready for occupancy in the spring of 1964. The cost of the three bedroom parsonage was \$15,500. By the time the parsonage was completed it was debt free.

Reverend Burton Mick and his family had been our pastoral family from 1952 to 1956.

Then, in August of 1963, Reverend Mick and his family returned to pastor us. He and his family continued living in Grand Rapids until our parsonage was completed.

HINDERLEIDER SCHOOL HOUSE

When our school district was annexed to the Saranac School in the fall of 1963, the Hinderleider School was closed. The property had been given to the school as long as it was used for a school. When it closed the property reverted to the original owner, Racie Haller. She gave the property to the church in 1988.

The Wesleyan Church

In June of 1968 the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Pilgrim Holiness Church were united to form the Wesleyan Church - Our name changed to the West Berlin Wesleyan Church. Michigan was divided into three Districts - the North Michigan and East Michigan the West Michigan. The West Michigan District, of which our church was a part, was changed from the Conference of Wesleyan Methodist Church and became the West Michigan District of the Wesleyan Church.

Church Building Addition

Reverend Alvin Barker was our pastor when we began the addition to our church building in 1973. That addition expanded to include the side entrance to the church which is used today, the narthex, the bathrooms, the nursery, and the back entrance of the church. At the time we began the project the church and sanctuary were situated so the congregation faced the west. After the addition was completed the altar and the congregation were facing east. This addition was completed and dedicated on June 1, 1975. Shortly after the dedication the project was debt free.

Decess/Tucker Ball Field

Around 1980, when Kenneth Hill was pastor, the church bought the two acres north of the church building from the Vierzen family for \$2000 cash. A couple of years later, Ken Tucker and Paul Decess bought a grader that the county was retiring. They used that to level the field, which made it suitable for a ball field. Around 1998, when David Henry was pastor, they added the backstop.

Further Addition

In 1990 during Pastor Gordy Iocco's pastorate, we voted to expand our Sunday School area by digging a basement beneath the sanctuary. That was quite a project, but with God's help and the help of many volunteers we were able to finish it. A barrier free access to the basement under the sanctuary was also added. The dedication ceremony took place on May 31, 1992. Again when the dedication ceremony was done, we were debt free.

Ebenzer Center

It was the vision of West Berlin Wesleyan church to provide for our church family and the community a larger building for community and church events. This was the most ambitious project that we had ever planned. After polling our church family and members of our community for opinions and suggestions we felt we should begin this building.

We formed a building committee in 1995 which consisted of: Mary Copeland; Carmen and Larry Curtiss (chair); Paul Decess; Cheryl Gilbert; Bonnie Jackson; Frank Mitchell; Jill Stilson; Kathy Tucker and Phyllis Ypma. Pastor Mark Lipscomb came on the committee in 2000 and Chuck and Sylvia Hutchinson joined in 2002. We had many planning sessions and we visited several other churches in our area who had put up large buildings. We needed an idea of what we wanted and many ideas were gleaned from these visits.

Ebenzer Center

Due to a large donation to our church by Ralph and Katherine Jordan our idea went forward. Thus began a procession of annual Hog Roasts in the spring of the year and a Chili Dinner with sleigh rides in the snow, pulled by real horses. That was very popular, especially with the Kids. They loved the horses and the horses were very patient with the children, and even the adults who wanted to pet them. Finally we had the funding to begin.

Ebenzer Center

Land for our project was donated to our church by Chris and Carla Jackson in honor of Chris' parents. In the fall of 1996 we drew up plans with the help of Paul Decess. Pastor Mark Lipscomb was our pastor when we finally set the date of August 10, 2003 for the official ground breaking ceremony. Construction started in early 2004. We contacted the MMAP Organization and they sent four teams to help us with our building. Later that help would increase to 19 teams. Along with the MMAP'ers (Mobile Missionary Assistance Program), many of our church family volunteered their time and talents to bring this project to fruition.

Ebenzer Center

Larry Curtiss, Paul Decess and Pastor Mark Lipscomb were appointed as a steering committee for building the Ebenezer Center. Pastor Mark was the site manager and coordinated the day to day operations and scheduled the work and made sure, with Larry's help, that supplies were available. Paul was the engineer for the project and drew up various detailed plans and documents that required an engineer's seal. Larry kept the project moving ahead and kept a keen eye on finances, always looking for ways to get things done at the right price and the best quality.

Ebenzer Center

As we had not yet decided on a name for our building it was decided to include the church family in this decision, so we held a contest. Our church family submitted names that they thought appropriate for this building. The winning name was The Ebenezer Center which comes from 1 Samuel 7:12. Ebenezer is a commemoration of divine assistance, "Thus far the Lord has helped us."

Pastor Mark was also our pastor when we held the dedication ceremony on Sunday, November 30, 2008. Again, our building was debt free at the time of the dedication.

Ebenzer Center

Between August 10, 1996 and November 30, 2008 our church family, members of our community and funds raised from our fundraising projects we were able to raise \$565,000 to completely pay for this beautiful building we call the Ebenezer Center.

We were able to fund and install an emergency power generator in 2016.

Outdoor Play Area

Following the death of her husband, Daryl, in 2004, Bonnie Jackson donated funds to purchase and install the play scape located between the Ebenezer Center and Hinderleider school house in his honor. Additionally, swings and a slide were moved from the west side of the Hinderleider into the play-scape area. This has been a huge hit with the children.

In 2017, as his eagle scout project Jared Williams (son of Chuck and Mariah) led in the design and building of a walk way from the south doors of Ebenezer Center and past the parking lot on the east side. This gave our children a safe place to walk to and from the play area.

Andy Penninga removed top soil and put in a load of sand, which was used to build a small basketball court west of the play area. Other contributors and volunteers paid for cement, baskets, backstop and labor costs.

Children's Ministry

In 2001, Caroline Dibaba started a Wednesday evening Kid's Club. As a young mother, she wanted the children of our church to have a fun time and learn more about Jesus like she had done as a youngster. The next year, she introduced Raised On Christ Kids curriculum. They called that program ROCK. Caroline would go on to write a three-year-through-the-Bible-in-stories curriculum. She would direct ROCK for thirteen years.

VBS

Caroline revived Vacation Bible School in 2002 and continued to lead that until 2007. By that time she was the executive director at Branch Adventures (a Christian day camp, which started in 2005). Caroline started Seeds of HOPE in 2011, which is a one-on-one mentoring program in the school system (moving ministry off campus). In 2012 Caroline was commissioned by our church as a home missionary. In 2016, we began cooperating with the multi-church VBS effort in Saranac.

SUPPER'S READY

In the early days of ROCK, Kathy Tucker would pickup kids to bring them to the program. When she found out that some of those kids were hungry, she started giving them food when she picked them up. Afterward, she would send them home with more food to eat. That kids were always hungry was a heavy burden on Kathy's soul.

In 2008 Kathy retired from the US Postal Service and immediately organized a Wednesday evening community supper. This program has been an effective outreach ministry to our community. Adults, as well as kids enjoy the food and fellowship. Some of them we don't see on Sundays. The meals are funded through free-will donations.

While there were six to eight kids in the early days of ROCK, once Supper's Ready started attendance grew greatly. It was common to have 20 to 30 kids on a Wednesday evening. But kids grow up and need something more.

TEEN TIME

About the same time, as Caroline Dibaba started Kid's Club, Ellen Lipscomb started a group for teens. There were only a couple of teens the first couple of years. But they began to invite friends, and those friends brought more. In a few years, there were 20 to 30 teens in attendance. Most of these teens came from unchurched homes. Teens being teens with other activities, there were another 20 who would not make it on any given Wednesday evening.

As the group grew, Cliff and Wendi Curtiss began to help. In the early days, when the group was still small, they would do a summer getaway to the Lipscomb family cabin in the north woods. The kids loved the activities and the serious times too.

TEEN TIME cont.

The curriculum was based on Bible familiarity as most of the kids didn't know what a Bible looked like, but small rewards and a competitive spirit kept up interest. They watched a lot of movies—both religious and secular. They would take three or four weeks to watch a movie one section at a time and then pull out the lessons from that meeting's portion.

In 2011, Bill and Rachel Wilson joined our church. Bill wanted to work with teens, and so he became Ellen's helper. They did a couple of mission trips during those years. One was to an inner-city church in Muskegon. Teens learned about service as they painted and repaired areas around the church during the day and led a VBS for children in the evening. Another trip took them to City Life Church in Grand Rapids where they worked on the church and did some repairs to neighbors' homes. These trips had minimal cost to the teens just the adventure and fun of serving others.

TEEN TIME cont.

In 2017, Rev Kevin Fletcher and family joined our church. He had been a youth pastor and so he began to help Ellen and transitioned into leading the group. This allowed Bill Wilson to help his wife, Rachel, with Rock, which she was then leading.

For his eagle scout project, Colin Pett led in the design and remodeling of the West Berlin Chapel basement in 2019. This is the area under the sanctuary. It had one side open and three smaller class rooms on the other side. Now, there is one very large area that is designed for our teens to have a meeting place.

MOLD

In June of 2009, heavy rains caused heavy flooding in the basement of the church building (now West Berlin Chapel). The trustees were not able to clear the water and dry the walls. Brad's Cleaning was equipped and they finished the work. They also found mold in the walls, which required a lot of repairs.

The chapel, which was filled to 80% capacity on Sundays, was closed for that winter. In March of 2010 the chapel was reopened with an early Sunday morning traditional worship service. (A more contemporary service was held after that in the Ebenezer Center.) Some congregants reported trouble breathing and a bad odor in the chapel. In September, mold tests showed unacceptably high levels of molds, which posed a major health risk. Therefore, we closed the chapel.

Larry Curtiss found the cure to the water incursion problem. Bentonite sealed leaks in the foundations and subterranean walls and the drain was improved, which has worked very well. It took time to remediate the mold problem, but in early September 2012, the chapel was certified as safe to use by our testing company.

Gateway Church Closes

On Saturday, July 25, 2015, Gateway Community Wesleyan Church, formerly known as Clarksville Wesleyan Church closed. Thus ended 150 years of service to Clarksville and the surrounding area. This church, first known as the Clarksville Wesleyan Methodist Church, was organized in 1865. They built their church building in 1882 at a cost of \$1800. They held a centennial celebration on October 10, 1964 and were in the beginning stages of planning for the sesquicentennial celebration when they closed their doors. We were delighted to welcome some of these worshipers into our church family.

The Bridge Merger

When the Impact Wesleyan Church in Lowell grew too large, some of the church family decided to move to Saranac and establish a church there. They named their church The Bridge. They held their first service in Saranac on Easter Sunday in March of 2012. They began meeting in the High School, but then the empty middle school building became available and they moved to that location.

It was in November of 2015, that the School District notified The Bridge that they would be closing the middle school building. Not having a place for their people to worship, their Pastor, Joel Leipprandt Jr, contacted Pastor Mark Lipscomb to see if they could use our building on Saturday night for their service. We approved that and, with Pastor Joel, decided that the two congregations would meet in a combined service November 29, 2015. Shortly after, members of The Bridge decided to merge with West Berlin. We began meeting together in December. In 2016, Pastor Joel would move on to pastor The Well church in Ionia.

As in any relationship, it took a while to sort out details and preferences. This resulted in a new schedule with early (traditional) service at 8:15 AM in the chapel and second (contemporary) service at 10 in the Ebenezer Center. It also brought us an expanded children's ministry to our great delight. This schedule change meant the end of traditional Sunday School for all ages. Children meet during the 10 AM worship service for a time of learning about Jesus and the Bible. Once a month, they have a special emphasis on missions, missionaries and their children. Adults began to meet in small groups, as had been the pattern at The Bridge. One small group meets between the two worship services.

PATHWAY, a Wesleyan Church

The year 2016 saw many changes as congregations and cultures merged. The Local Board of Administration under Pastor Mark Lipscomb's leadership sensed a need to express our unity through a name change for the church.

June 12, 2016 West Berlin's annual Local Church Conference met. At that meeting the membership voted to change the name of the church. To allow time for member and friends to be involved in the process, selection of the name was postponed until the first Sunday in October.

October 2, 2016 a special Local Church Conference met. In the weeks preceding the conference members and friends suggested names and stated their preferences for possible choices. The conference voted for Pathway—a Wesleyan church.

WEST BERLIN WESLEYAN METHODIST

R Thompson 1896 - 1897
Sylvester Young (Margaret) 1897 - 1898
Moses Badder (Helen) 1898 - 1903
Milton Remele 1903 - 1905
Edward Dake 1905 - 1906
A Starn 1906 - 1907
C Bradley 1907 - 1908
Albert Alverson (Sarah) 1908 - 1911
Verner Sibley (Grace) 1911 - 1913
Isaac Philo (Anna) 1913 - 1916
Elmer Day (Josephine) 1916 - 1919
Allen Merrill (Lovina) 1919 - 1922
Floyd Barker (Ruth) 1922 - 1927

Leonard Burkey (Lillian) 1927 - 1929
Daniel Beach (Emily) 1929 - 1930
C Hawkey 1930 - 1931
Frank Wilson 1931 - 1933
S Wallace Calhoon (Helen) 1933 - 1936
C Dewey Friess (Nellie) 1936 - 1941
Harry Cole (Bertha) 1941 - 1943
Bruce Densmore (Katherine) 1943 - 1946
Levi Slagle (Emma) 1946 - 1952
Burton Mick (Jeanette) 1952 - 1956
Raymond Carpenter (Geraldine) 1956 - 1958
J Leroy Blocher (Retha) 1958 - 1960
Marvin Stuart (Ann) 1960 - 1963

WEST BERLIN WESLEYAN

Burton Mick (Jeanette) 1963 - 1966
Ernest Crocker (Dorothy) 1966 - 1969
Glenn Pettigrove (Joy) 1969 - 1972
Alvin Barker (Pauline) 1972 - 1978
Kenneth Jill (Laurel) 1978 - 1984

Stephen Collins (Colleen) 1984 - 1985
Gordon Iocco (Valerie) 1985 - 1993
David Henry (Carol) 1993 - 1998
Chad Baird 1998 - 2000
Mark Lipscomb (Ellen) 2000 - 2016

PATHWAY, A WESLEYAN CHURCH

Mark Lipscomb (Ellen) 2016 - 2020