

“ *Our Inspiring Heritage* ”

“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come!” - 1 Corinthians 10:1-5,11

Our Denomination:

The Church of the United Brethren in Christ is the first denomination to be born in North America! It began in the mid-1700s. Dead formalism had beset the established churches. But then a revival movement, a “Great Awakening”, swept through the British colonies of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. Attempts were made to revive the existing churches and reach the lost through “great meetings,” which emphasized the new birth and a deeper life experience with God.

Leaders of the established denominations opposed these emphases. Therefore, the revival movement leaders formed a new denomination — the first North American born church, not a transplant from Europe.

Spearheading the movement were Philip William Otterbein and Martin Boehm. Otterbein, a German Reformed minister, immigrated to Pennsylvania from Germany in 1752. Boehm was a Mennonite pastor. The two men met on Pentecost Sunday in 1767 in a barn near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, during a service in which Boehm preached. Otterbein threw his arms around Boehm afterwards and exclaimed, “We are brethren.” From that greeting came the name “United Brethren.”

Gradually, the movement took form and proceeded toward becoming a full-fledged denomination. A conference in 1800 adopted the name “Church of the United Brethren in Christ” and elected Otterbein and Boehm as bishops. They served until their deaths.

United Brethren doctrinal beliefs were outlined in a Confession of Faith used since 1789 and adopted at the first General Conference in 1815. The statement has remained essentially unchanged. It is not a long, detailed statement, but concisely spells out our major beliefs concerning Christian faith and practice. A Constitution was adopted in 1841.

The denomination grew rapidly, expanding into Ohio and Indiana and later into Ontario with the westward migration of people in the new lands. In 1821 the church took an historic stand against slavery, which hindered the church’s growth in the Southern U.S.

Other denominational elements were added. Departments were formed as needed. A publishing house was begun and colleges and seminaries started, including what is now Huntington University. Since 1817 a General Conference — our highest governing body — has

been held every four years. The 51st General Conference was held in Kitchener, ON in May of 2013.

Toward the end of the 19th Century, problems arose concerning lay representation in General Conference and membership in secret societies. A division occurred in 1889, producing two fellowships with the same United Brethren name. The larger, more liberal group adopted a new constitution and confession of faith. That group today is part of the United Church of Canada and the United Methodist Church in the U.S.A.

We, the smaller group, reorganized under the guidance of Bishop Milton Wright, father of the famous Wright Brothers. We had to start over again in most areas, with many congregations having lost their property. But gradually, the church picked up the pieces and moved forward. In 1897, headquarters were established in Huntington, Indiana.

Today, the United Brethren Church has over 550 churches around the world in 18 countries, with 10 National Conferences.

Our Canadian Conference:

Bishop Christian Newcomer first visited Canada in 1825, and a number of churches began in those early years, but joined other groups for lack of connection. John A. Cornell started an independent church in Sheffield, Ontario and a number of preaching points up and down the Grand River. In 1854 he, his family and his church joined the United Brethren Church. More U.B. pastors came up from the States to join the Canadians and churches were planted in the Niagara, Waterloo and Bruce County regions.

A renewed emphasis on church planting has occurred in recent years, including new churches in Port Colborne, Port Elgin, Cambridge, and a Vietnamese church and house church movement in Guelph.

Our Congregation:

Bishop Jacob Erb visited Waterloo County in the 1830s and led many people to Christ, but a UB church wasn't started until the 1850s. In 1855 Israel Sloane started the first UB church in "Berlin". That group met in a small, frame church bought from the Wesleyans. In 1893 they began meeting in a church they built on Alma Street (now 35 Charles Street E.). The church sent missionaries to Sierra Leone like Rev. & Mrs. A.F. Stoltz, Will Nash, and Rev. Lloyd Eby. Rev. Staunton Lautenschlager, Sarah Herner, and Roy Lautenschlager all served in the UB mission in China.

Rev. Lloyd Eby was not only a missionary to Africa, but planted churches in Toronto, Detroit and Los Angeles. He was a U.B. Bishop 1949-1957.

Rev. Keith Nicholson spearheaded the move to the Stanley Park area in 1970. The land was purchased from Lloyd Shantz for \$1, and a building was erected where the congregation worships to this day.