

TOMLINSON RUN CHURCH OF CHRIST HISTORY

typed up by Randy Jones on 11/12/24

(please note that Tomlinson Run's history will be below the end of Weirton Heights' history). Also (Interesting information given by Joe Blake about the information below is in these two videos: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saUgTgqYe_k <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9HQfJ4Rx00>)

History of the Weirton Heights church of Christ. By Darlene McKinney

(Darlene was the daughter of George R. (Ted) Hanlin and Alice (maiden name of Creamer). Darlene passed from this life Dec. 22, 2015. She was 70 when she passed.) (added by RJ)

When we sing "Faith of our Fathers" we immediately think of men such as Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Peter, Paul, and James. We think about the Christian martyrs who suffered so cruelly under the reigns of tyrant leaders; independent thinkers who began the restoration movements throughout European History; or persons who braved crossing the Atlantic Ocean to settle in a land promising religious freedom. Maybe the song brings to mind the trials faced by men like Alexander Cambell, J.D. Tant and others who travelled around the United States in an effort to restore New Testament Christianity.

Perhaps when we sing this song, we might also remember the faith that lived in some folks only a half century ago which led to a congregation of the Lord being established in Weirton.

Shortly after World War I, a young couple by the name of Ben and Laura Way from Ben's Run, W.V., came to Weirton in search of employment. They secured jobs here and settled in a house on Cove Road. Ben and Laura were both Christians, and their desire to keep the Lord's Supper led them to attend services of the Christian Church here. After only one visit, Ben decided they could not continue to worship where a mechanical instrument was used along with the singing.

The Ways had a relative in the church at Neffs, Ohio, a small town about fifty miles southwest of Weirton; so, for a time they travelled by streetcar and taxi to attend services there. The long trip and necessity of staying overnight eventually led Ben and Laura to seek a way of meeting for worship a little closer to home.

Meanwhile, there was another Christian who was living in Weirton by the name of Ethel Dennis. Ethel's husband, Jim, had also come to Weirton from the St. Mary's area seeking employment in 1912; and shortly thereafter, they were married and settled on Cove Road. One of Ethel's children, Olive Stephen, who is a member of our congregation today, remembers how her family rode the streetcar to Steubenville to attend worship services of the church which met in the Old Rex Theater building and in the Odd Fellows Hall then. Mrs. Dennis was acquainted with the Ways and suggested they meet together to worship GOD.

Also living in Weirton in the early 1920'S on Marland Heights Road was a couple named William and Stella Ash. These people are deceased and there isn't much information available about them at this writing, except that they were very dedicated Christians. However, the Way, Ash and Dennis families began meeting together in each other's homes in 1923.

Still another Weirton family, Ralph and Thursia Peavey, who had come to Weirton to find work in the mill around 1921 and lived in a house all the way at the top of Heaslett Avenue, began meeting with them here. Their daughter, Gertrude Sweeney, who is still a member of the West Street Church today, lived on Washington Street with her husband, William, and three children and remembers meeting from house to house in those early years. A younger brother, Jim, also attended then.

The church met on Sunday evenings and services were always conducted in a very formal manner. When it was the Dennis' turn to host the worship services, the family moved back the living room furniture and set up benches which were hand made by Ethel's husband especially for this purpose. Although Jim never obeyed the gospel himself, he eagerly leant a hand whenever there was a need and was a significant factor in helping the church become established here.

There was not much socializing between the members other than the fellowship they enjoyed at these services because everyone's time was taken up with hard work and just keeping their families together.

Between the years 1923 and 1927 the church grew enough to rent the upstairs of the old City Building located on Cove Road in the approximate area of today's City Building. Later, they met in the old I.O.O.F. Hall on Main Street. The first gospel meeting in Weirton was held by Tom Kirkman in a tent set up on Hudson Avenue in 1924.

By 1927 the membership had decided they needed a meeting house of their own so they purchased land of their own on Orr Street and erected a building with labor being donated by the men, and the building was dedicated the **Holliday Cove Church of Christ. (NOTE: Dorothy Rowland has included a picture of this building down at the end of this account. This added by RJ.)** This small building had a coal furnace in the basement that required some of the men coming early in cold weather to build a fire so it would be nice and warm by the time members assembled for services. And, of course, there was a “powder room” built just outside in the building’s small yard. There was no baptistry so people who wished to obey the gospel were usually baptized in Harmon Creek at a location area residents called “The Three Arches” because there was an arched railroad bridge there.

Some of the first men who served the church in Weirton were: Ralph Peavey and Froan Buchanan, elders; William Ash and Ben Way, deacons.

There are too many names to list all of the Orr Street members here, but a few of the family names who are still members of our congregation today are: Cline, Dennis, Stephen, Wetzel, and Wright. Opal Wetzel recalls that when she and John first came to live here in 1930, they had heard there was a church here, so every Sunday they set out walking all over the town determined to find where it was meeting. It was only after their first child had died of a serious illness and they had taken the baby back to Middlebourne to be buried that they met a preacher who knew a member of the church in Weirton. He contacted Manny Way, who then got in touch with John and Opal and took them to services with them.

By 1941 the church had grown to 150 members and needed a larger building to accommodate them. They purchased a lot at 3530 West Street and began construction. They built the basement first. They met in the basement for 3 or 4 years. *In the meantime, West Street sponsored a tent meeting in the late 1940s on Weir Ave. It stirred up a good bit of interest there. A number of black families attended the meeting. As a result of the interest, West Street decided to rent a building on Weir Ave. for a number of years. One of the black members on Weir Ave. became a preacher there. Dorothy Rowland remembers that there was good singing there. Joe & his brothers attended there at Weir Ave. for about a year. (this was added by Joe Blake).* The building construction on West Street was completed and the building was dedicated on September 3 1950., the **West Street Church of Christ**. As the congregation was growing and they were building their building on

West Street, the congregation was also helping congregations get started in Pughtown, WV (eventually Tomlinson Run); Langloth, PA; and Toronto, OH.

Men who served as elders at West Street between 1950 and 1958 were: Ermel Amos, Dale Beagle, and Roland Wright. Deacons were Alvin Barnhart, Victor Roden and Warren Williams.

Some of the men who served as the first preachers in Weirton were: C.D. Beagle, H.J. Bankes (the grandfather of Russell Bankes, Jr., who is the minister for the West Street Church today), Joe Taylor, Horace Taylor, Elmer Taylor, Wellington Gallagher, Robert Cooper, Charley Welles, Harold Hadley, G.R. Hanlin, L.V. Bays, Fred Dennis and Denver Cooper.

Again, the church's membership increased so much (325 active members) that it was decided to establish a second congregation in the city of Weirton on Weirton Heights. A building was erected at Guy and Marie Streets and dedicated the **Weirton Heights Church of Christ** (note: this is a different building, but the same congregation as the one on Pennsylvania Ave.- added by Joe Blake) in March of 1958. This congregation began with 75 members.

Preachers who have served the Weirton Heights Church before Brother Kenney are: Paul J. Casebolt, William Daines and Denver E. Cooper. Elders who served the church at Guy and Marie Street were R.B. Wright, Warren Shepherd, B.L. Wright and Robert Kinney.

Soon the membership had grown at the Weirton Heights congregation and plans were made to erect a new building at the present location (Pennsylvania Ave). This building was completed at a cost close to \$250,000 and was dedicated in the fall of 1969.

And so, we come to be what we are today. We might like to speculate about how things would have turned out if the faith of those early Christians who established and supported a congregation of the Lord's people in Weirton during the past 56 years had not been so strong. Or we might even wonder what would have happened if those who fell away through the years had been stronger and more supportive. At any rate, what is done is done; and the only relevant question left to us today is - - -

What effect will my life have on the future of the Weirton Heights Church of Christ?

Darlene asks, "What is the future for the church here?"

How many of the older members are going to be gone in 2-3-4-5

years?

Who's going to step up to the work here?

Young men and women are you prepared for the work here?

Have you obeyed the gospel? Not just for work but for salvation?

Everyone is important for the work here. Both young and old."

She also says, "I wonder what if Ben & Laura Way had let somebody else do it, where would we be today? WHAT WOULD GOD THINK ABOUT US?"

HISTORY OF TOMLINSON RUN CHURCH OF CHRIST

(This is mostly related by Joe Blake. Some confirmed by Paul Blake SR, and also Dorothy Rowland).

These persons were worshipping in Weirton and they needed a place to worship that was closer to home. They were Howard & Winnie Nuzum (father of Alvin & Lloyd), Alvin & Edith Nuzum, Lloyd & Lillian Nuzum, Burley & Georgie Davis, Joel & Lucille Harless, and Jim & Dessie Wagner. They all lived near Pughtown (which was later renamed New Manchester).

With the help of the West Street congregation these brethren decided to hold a tent meeting in Pughtown about 1946. The preacher at the tent meeting was C.D. Beagle. Roy Moore obeyed the gospel at this tent meeting. Roy's wife was Opal. The above brethren decided to start worshipping there in Pughtown. After the tent meeting, they rented the one room schoolhouse in Pughtown to hold services.

From 1946 thru 1947 people from the poor Farm (older men who were poor and had no families were taken there to live) (located on Frankfort Road) came to worship at the school house in Pughtown with the brethren there. Also worshipping there were Hazel Reed, Lloyd and Lillian Nuzum, and their daughter, Joyce Nuzum who was a baby at the time. Dorothy Rowland was approximately 12 and Joe Blake was 7.

Joe states that "my brothers Scott, Paul and I went there, to Pughtown, and my Uncle Wagner took us there with them, for worship, in 1949. We rode in the back of his pickup truck." As of 11/12/24 Joe also said, "I don't know of anybody else that is still living that was there other than Dorothy Rowland and her friend Shirley Lamp Swartzmiller, and my brother Paul."

Dorothy Rowland said of Sunday worship back then at Pughtown, "After morning worship, if we didn't go to Burley & Georgie Davis's home for lunch (a good lunch too) for the day, then those of us who didn't want to eat at the Davis's home,

would stop on Frankfort Road at the Tom Butler farm., and have our picnic lunch under a tree in a field of his. We would spend the afternoon there. Manford Lamp (the preacher) would study his lesson for the evening while we were there. Manford's daughter Shirley was Dorothy's good friend. Dorothy also said Shirley's father, would take Dorothy with them when they would eat a picnic lunch in the field that Joe had mentioned above.

Joe says that there was a small supply room in the one room school house, and that is where the children went for Bible Class. Their teacher was Alvin Nuzum. He was a young man about 22-23 years old. Alvin had been in WWII in the Army. His younger brother, Forrest, was in the war also. They both were recently home from the war.

The group of Christians meeting there at Pughtown wanted a proper building to worship in so they purchased two building lots there in Pughtown on Route 8, near where the Dollar General store is now. Their plan was to build on those two lots.

After purchasing those two lots, the men found out that this building (the current Tomlinson Run Church of Christ building) might be for sale by the United Presbyterian Church, whose headquarters for the area was located in Steubenville, Ohio. This building was not being used and there was another Presbyterian Church in Hookstown, Pa. The TR building was closed down. There were two types of Presbyterian churches back then and they came together to form one. The TR building group disbanded in 1934.

Those brethren that were worshiping in Pughtown, made an offer on the building in 1951. Joe said that when Harold Nuzum met with the Presbyterian Headquarters men to finalize the deal. He told the Presbyterian men that they would get the building they were buying moved to its new location in Pughtown as soon as possible. The Presbyterian men replied to him, "why are you moving the building?" Harold Nuzum replied, "we have to get it off the property." The Presbyterian man said, "You got the ground also with the building." This came as an obvious, but pleasant surprise to the Pughtown members. Lloyd Nuzum told Joe Blake this.

The property for the TR building was given to the Presbyterian Church by Matthew Nickles who owned a lot of ground. (He is buried in the cemetery in back of the TR building). The first building at the current TR location was built around 1834 at a cost of \$300 and it was a log cabin. The Indians burned it down. Joe said that the second building was a log cabin and it also burned down. The current building was built in 1895. Joe said that the building had been vacant for many

years (1934 to 1951) since the group disbanded in 1934 and that coon hunters used the building at night sometimes when they were running their dogs.

The current building was purchased in 1951 for the price of \$1,500. Joe thinks that it was purchased sometime during the summer months. The building then had no bathrooms. Only outhouses. It had no basement. It had a furnace room which was under the front of the building, with access to it from outside. That furnace room is still there. It had no class rooms, nor a baptistry, and no foyer. The ceiling was still vaulted to the roof. It was hard to heat during the cold months. The members made two classrooms in the back of that building by hanging some rods with curtains, where the coat racks and the baby's room are today. They would use the baptistry at the Chester congregation when needed.

The sisters worked very hard to get the building cleaned up and ready for use. There were wasp nests everywhere. He continues that the sisters are very important for the work: Lord's Table, cleaning, teaching little children, helping the sick members at their homes, taking food to people. He says, "Your help is IMPORTANT"! The old unused building could not have been worshiped in without the hard work of the sisters.

In approximately 1957 a man named Andrews was hired as the contractor. He hired Floyd and Carl Pugh, to dig out and build a basement under the existing building. They used a slip scoop and a small bulldozer to accomplish this. The TR buildings original foundation was left undisturbed. The basement walls exist 3 or 4 feet inside of the original foundation. They added the classrooms in the back of the building after the basement was finished.

At some point in time the members also had the ceiling dropped down much lower to aid in heating the building.

The parsonage house was built on the TR property in early 1960. The men of TR did most of the work to save the cost of the home. Richard Brewer's family was the first to live in the new parsonage. They moved into the house in probably 1961.

In 1962 to 1965 Tomlinson Run helped to establish the Church of Christ on New Cumberland Heights. The building TR purchased was originally built to become a bar, but it was never opened as a bar, so TR bought it. Denzel Wharton was an elder at TR at the time, and left TR to become an elder there along with Carl Clegg.

In about 2010 the front foyer and bathrooms were added onto the TR building, because the government required public buildings to be handicapped accessible.

Joe Blake became a deacon in 1971. He became an elder in 2008. He has served continuously as either a deacon or elder, 53 years (as of 2024).

Elders that have served at TR: Howard Nuzum, Lloyd Nuzum, Albert Norman, Rolli Riffle, Denzel Wharton, Carl Parsons, Kenny Berdine, Bill Gailey, Paul R. Blake, Gary Berdine, Joe Blake, Ralph Baker, Ron Hennen, Ken Fleeman, Jeff Rhodes.

Dorothy Rowland adds that when she was 7 or 8, (possibly around 1944), her parents, Joel and Lucille Harless, along with cousins Jess & Ada Chapman, were there when Judy Snider's dad Kester Pryor was baptized at the Arches there on Harmon Creek in Weirton.

Also included below is a picture that Dorothy had of the church building on Orr Street around 1940-1941.

MEN THAT WERE THE FULL TIME PREACHER AT TR SINCE 1954, IN ORDER BELOW.

- Ted Hanlin
- Rolli Riffle
- Richard Brewer
- Bill Calame
- Tommy Icard
- David Brewer
- Owen Thomas
- Paul R. Blake
- B.J. Young
- Carlos Valenzuela (12/2002 to current)

This is the photo of the Orr Street Church of Christ, that Dorothy Rowland has. On the back of the photo below is written: Church of Christ – Orr Street – Weirton, WV - About 1940-1941- We started the Church here in 1940

