



The Good News

Special Birthday Edition— October 7, 2012 Volume 65 No. 10b

PHCC (Pulaski Heights Christian Church)

web: phcc-lr.org



PHCC is a Hillcrest community church. It has been located at the corner of Spruce and Hillcrest since October 7, 1927. The 85 year old congregation has always been affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Our email: lrphcc@gmail.com

(Photo: Cleanup of Nolan Garden, 1990. Betty Adams, Mary Hunter.)

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That's Who We Are

Pulaski Heights Christian Church completed the first 85 years of its ministry on October 7, 2012. For many years there was tremendous continuity in membership. People who attended in the 1960s were still attending in the 1980s and 1990s. When some of them became too old to attend regularly, they still kept in touch with the church.

Around the turn of the century there were very few members remaining who had been here for a long time. There weren't even many who had recently begun attending. By 2007 the weekly average attendance had dwindled to fewer than 25 persons. Occasionally, there would be only 11 souls in attendance on Sunday morning. The church called Rev. Holly H. Patton to the pulpit in 2009 to become the church's 14th pastor, following the resignation of Sharon Coote. The congregation undertook a discernment process led by the Regional and National church; the purpose of this was to determine whether the slightly larger merging of PHCC and River of Grace Christian Churches could continue to survive. Would it be worth keeping the doors open?

We decided that it would. All we had to do was reach out to a demographic that had been officially welcomed, and represented a good percentage of our membership in 2009 when the transition occurred. That has led to a resurgence in numerical growth, but the death of three of our long-term members in 2011, and the attrition of many who attended before 2009 means that we no longer have a continuous memory present with us. We no longer have a core group of people numbering in the tens, who clearly remember the church as it was 20, or 30 years ago. That number has been reduced considerably.

But we, the outsiders to much of the church's history, can make new history. Perhaps in another 20 years we will have people attending PHCC who can recall what the church was like 30 years before. Who can predict what the church will be like in 2032? All we know for sure is that if it still holds down the corner of Hillcrest and Spruce, it will have been here for 105 years.

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The church continues to minister to the downtrodden, and the marginalized, who often don't recognize their own status.

We continue to use Dr. Joseph Hunter's motto:

**This Church defends no doctrine but Christ,
preaches no gospel but love,
has no purpose but to serve.**

That isn't a motto that's going to fill the building to the rafters. It doesn't promise earthly riches and an impressive building program. It doesn't exclude those who "aren't like me." But it is a motto that fills our hearts with a need and an intention to serve our neighbors, without defining who is and isn't eligible for inclusion as a "neighbor." Today, the church continues to act on its core belief that if someone wants to worship Christ, they should have a place to do so. The dedication to the *75th anniversary booklet* includes some ideas that were true in 1927, were still true in 2002, and remain true to this day:

"Pulaski Heights has never been a large church; our Sunday morning congregations have never been the largest in town. We prefer to be known for our service and openness--in pulpit and pew. This is the legacy given us by our founding preacher, Dr. Joseph Hunter." ... "Other ministers...have through their steadfast dedication to the principles of open pulpit, open membership and social justice fostered an atmosphere in which every Christian is free to meet God in their own way."

The dedication to the *50th anniversary booklet* include these words: *"The services of Pulaski Heights Christian Church have not been confined to the property at Hillcrest and Spruce. Locally and nationally it enjoys a reputation as an out-reach church, not only in giving but in community participation."*

That's who we were, that's who we are after 85 years of faithful service to one another and the surrounding community. With God's help and blessings we will continue to be here, perhaps never growing to an impressive size, but certainly moving forward into a world that *needs* whatever we can do to stand up for justice and equality as the years go by. We will continue to recognize, for example, that the homeless among our citizens are not worthless, but are human beings, who deserve consideration and respect...and to be fed. And to be clothed. It's true for us, as with every Christian organization, that we cannot minister directly to everyone who needs to be served. But we can minister to as many of those about whom we know, as we have resources and the heart to serve. And we will.

The passages quoted above will remain true!

EIGHTY-FIVE YEARS OF PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

by Dr. John W. Graves

There are hundreds of small religious congregations in Arkansas, but only a few of these have repeatedly made their way into history books. One such congregation is the Pulaski Heights Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Little Rock. Celebrating this month its founding in October, 1927, for eighty-five years the church has been witnessing for social justice, often speaking truth to power and challenging social norms and practices that have contravened core Christian values and teachings.

This splendid tradition had its origins in the career and life of its founding minister and first pastor, Dr. Joseph Boone Hunter. Reverend Hunter and his wife Mary Cleary Hunter both served as missionaries to Japan during the 1920s, where they met and were married and where their two children were later born.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on

December 7, 1941, the American government forcibly relocated Japanese Americans from their homes on the West Coast solely because of their Japanese ethnicity. Ten internment camps were established for these displaced persons, two of which, Jerome and Rohwer, were located in southeast Arkansas. The reception the Japanese Americans received upon their arrival in Arkansas was anything but an example of Southern hospitality. The state government refused to issue birth certificates for Japanese American children born at Jerome and Rohwer, and the Arkansas Medical Society urged its members not to provide any medical services or care for the internees. Ignoring the social opprobrium, Reverend Hunter accepted a request that he assume the post of Director of Human Services at the Rohwer camp, overseeing with his wife Mary, schooling, medical care, religious services, and activities surrounding births and deaths.



Joseph Boone Hunter family in Fort Worth, Texas; 1940. Hunter served as Director of Human Services at the World War II-era Japanese American Relocation Center in Rohwer (Desha County.) (Clockwise from bottom): Mary, Betty, Jack, and Joseph Hunter.

The Japanese American Citizens League subsequently awarded Reverend Hunter its highest honor for his promotion of social justice and racial understanding, and he later was among those instrumental in having the Rohwer site declared a National Historic Landmark.

Reverend Hunter was also a National Founder of the Disciples Peace Fellowship and continued to promote peace and brotherhood and sisterhood among all peoples throughout the rest of his life. To him, however, peace was never equated with passivity or turning a blind eye to injustice. When reviewing a film, *Operation Abolition*, that purported communist-backing for student protests at the University of California at Berkeley, he exposed the fact that the film was biased and had been doctored in an attempt to discredit the students. His criticism made the front pages of newspapers, and he was denounced by some as being a communist himself. The episode was investigated by the FBI, which found no substance to the charge, and Reverend Hunter was subsequently completely vindicated.



Elisabeth Eckbert in September 1957. "Will Counts, the photographer shot Hazel Massery, the white girl shouting in front of the man. 40 years later she apologized to Elisabeth..."

When the Little Rock Central High School crisis erupted in 1957 following Arkansas governor Orval Faubus's unsuccessful attempts to block racial integration at the school, Reverend Hunter was serving as Administrator for the Arkansas Council of Churches. In this capacity he worked with Daisy Bates and the Little Rock Nine to fight against racial bigotry

and oppression. He was joined by the Reverend Colbert Cartwright, then minister at Pulaski Heights Christian, who was ably supported by a leading congregant of the church, Forrest Rozzell, Executive Director of the Arkansas Education Association. Defying public criticism from white segregationists, Reverend Cartwright denounced Governor Faubus's actions from the pulpit, and he was one of only two or three white ministers in Arkansas's capital who praised

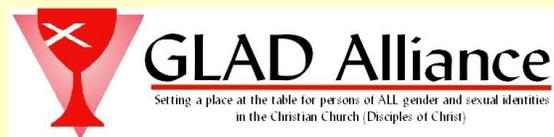
the courage of the nine black students at Central and repeatedly lent them support. In consequence, he and Forrest Rozzell were placed by Faubus under state police surveillance, with police investigators often being parked outside the church.

Winthrop Rockefeller, who later would become Governor of Arkansas himself, was so impressed by what Reverend Cartwright had done that he anonymously donated the funds to place the nine stained glass windows in the Pulaski Heights Christian Church sanctuary. A plaque located today in the church narthex next to the main church entrance commemorates Rockefeller's donation in honor of Colbert Cartwright and his commitment to justice and equality.



Window No. 4 on the east side of the Sanctuary. Winthrop Rockefeller donated the funds for nine windows.

More recently, Pulaski Heights Christian has continued its long tradition of progressive Christianity by becoming in 1992 the first Disciples' congregation in Arkansas and one of the first ten in the entire denomination to declare itself open and affirming. The door is open to everyone at Pulaski Heights Christian, regardless of their sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, gender, condition of disability, marital status, or degree of affluence and economic standing. Today, Pulaski Heights Christian Church continues to follow in the footsteps of its early founders and leaders, maintaining fidelity to their Social Gospel beliefs and principles and praying as did Jesus: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven."



Logo of Gays, Lesbians, and Affirming Disciples, an allied ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Hunter family photo from encyclopediaofarkansas.net
Courtesy of Betty Sorensen Adams

PHCC Ministers

Pulaski Heights Christian Church has been served by 15 pastors during its 85 years. One of these (Eldon Morgan) served as interim for half a year during 1977 and 1978. Of the 15 ministers, each served an average of six years. This is because two of the pastors, John and Judy Turner served at the same time. Judy Turner was the first female pastor at PHCC, beginning in 1980 following her ordination. Rev. Jim Burton was the first PHCC minister to wear a beard. As you know, Dr. Joseph Boone Hunter was simply the first to serve.

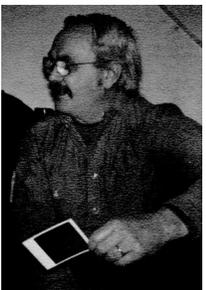
The longest tenure for any of these ministers was 13 years, and two men served for that duration: Dr. Joseph Hunter, and Rev. Arnold Nelson. Rev. Rhodes Thompson and Rev. Richmond Adams each served the shortest term, at two years. Donna Rountree was originally our Associate Minister in 1989, although she later left to fulfill that same position at Sherwood Christian, but returned as PHCC Senior Minister in 1999 to serve the church for the next four years.



1. Dr. Joseph B. Hunter
1927-1940 - 13 yrs



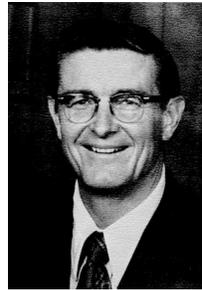
2. Rev. Sam F. Freeman
1940-1948 - 8 yrs



3. Rev. Lewis H. Deer
1948-1953 - 5 yrs



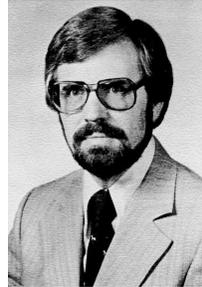
4. Rev. Colbert S. Cartwright
1954-1964 10 yrs



5. Rev. Rhodes H. Thompson
1964-1966 2 yrs



6. Rev. Linwood Coleman
1966-1971 5 yrs



7. Rev. James R. Burton
1971-1977 6 yrs

8. J. Eldon Morgan interim 1977 0.5 yrs
9. & 10. John & Judy Turner 1978-1985 7 yrs



11. Rev. Arnold C. Nelson
1984-1997 13 yrs

12. Rev. Richmond Adams 1997-1999 2 yrs



13. Rev. Donna Rountree
1999-2003 4 yrs



14. Sharon Coote
2003-2008 5 yrs



15. Rev. Holly H. Patton
2009-present 3 yrs to date

See John Graves's article on page 2 of this issue to learn more about our congregation's involvement in the Civil Rights movement, and in ministering to the Japanese-Americans interned at two camps in Arkansas during WWII.



In 1969 Rev. Linwood Coleman hosted a community-wide Service of Reconciliation for Blacks and Whites.



Rev. Arnold Nelson led the fight for the congregation to become the first Open and Affirming Disciples congregation in Arkansas, and the tenth

in the entire denomination. We have a long history of acting in favor of human rights for everyone. This is a long-term commitment because people's hearts cannot be changed in a flash. It takes time: almost always years or decades for the social change to occur, and our ministers have been stalwart in taking a stance for equality and sticking to it.

Small church or not, PHCC sent Lewis H. Deer to the Indianapolis office in 1953 to become national director of social education. Arnold Nelson left PHCC to go to Indianapolis and serve as the president of Homeland Ministries.

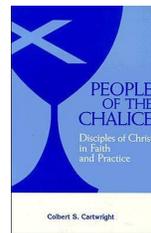
A life-long member, Rev. Jim Rainwater became the Arkansas Regional Minister for the Disciples of Christ.

And former member Jean Woolfolk served in several capacities at the national level, culminating in her service as National Moderator of the General



Assembly in 1974-1975. After that term she became the president of the Church Finance Council in Indianapolis for a number of years.

Rev. Colbert Cartwright published a book that still sells well, about the history and beliefs of the Disciples, *People of the Chalice*, in 1987. Later, he edited the *Chalice Worship Manual* published in 1995.





HISTORY
of our Building

Jan Painton paints the new wall outside the new church office in September 2002. Our church property has undergone a number of transformations since the church was established. Here are a few examples.

PULASKI HEIGHTS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

HILLCREST AND SPRUCE : TELEPHONE 3-8149
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

Note the telephone number above! As the church grew in the 1940s plans were made to transform the building. But the plans changed across the years. Fortunately we have some photos to show how it was, and drawings to show what our predecessors dreamed of.

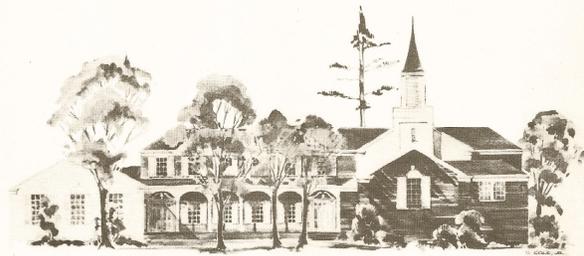
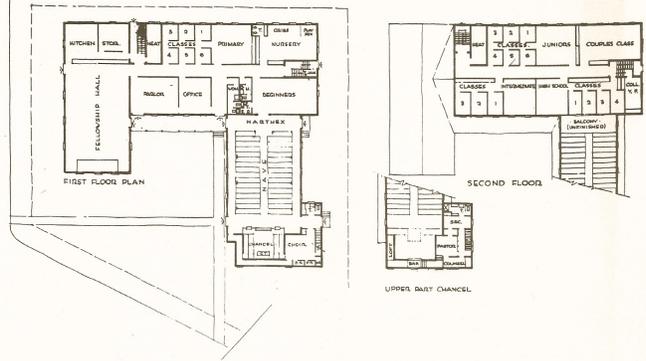
Below, left, is the church in September 1950. Below, right, is the plan made while Rev. Lewis Deer was here, between 1948 and 1953.



View from Hillcrest Street
Sanctuary is to the right,
other two buildings to be
torn down
Sept. 1950



By 1954 the buildings had been torn down, and the new educational building that we use today had been built. But the original Sanctuary was merely relocated to the corner where it sits now. Although it was connected to the new building by a doorway, the clapboard siding and front porch remained.



Future Home
Heights Christian Church Louis M. Deer, Pastor
Hillcrest and Spruce, Little Rock

This plan calls for the old Sanctuary to become a Fellowship Hall, after being moved to its present location. A new Sanctuary wing would be built with a second floor above the chancel. Upstairs would be all classrooms. The kitchen would have been where the chapel is now, and the parlor and office would have been located where Hunter Hall sits today. The Sanctuary wing was never built, but the educational building, with modifications, was built. After that, it was decided to simply keep the Sanctuary, but to remodel it. The facing page has a little bit about that transformation.



In December 1958 the church looked like this. Plans were in place to make a radical change to the Sanctuary appearance, fitting it to the appearance of the educational building, which would not be completed until August of 1959.



With the building in better shape, thoughts turned to the grounds. In 1989, the sons of Emma and John Nolan, James, John, and Billy, created the garden and patio on the east side of the sanctuary. Some plants were added to landscape the garden, but the rest of the yard was largely unchanged from the 1950s.



By 2007 there was a cell tower disguised as a bell-tower, there was a parking lot wrapped around the building on the east and north sides, but the Nolan Garden was the major improvement in the appearance of the grounds. A series of programs to landscape sections of the church grounds would change all that.



The 2012 Don Pierce Memorial Garden project completed the front landscaping. Hattie Armbrust left money to complete the west yard. Now, it is time for us to work on the interior of the buildings again. Stewardship is a never-ending responsibility!



Three pages of photos with and without captions, but full of stories, nonetheless:



Betty Hunter (standing, left) and friends in front of barracks at Rohwer Relocation Center; 1943.
Photo Courtesy of Betty Sorensen Adams



Betty Adams, Sept. 23, 2002.
Photo by Jan Painton



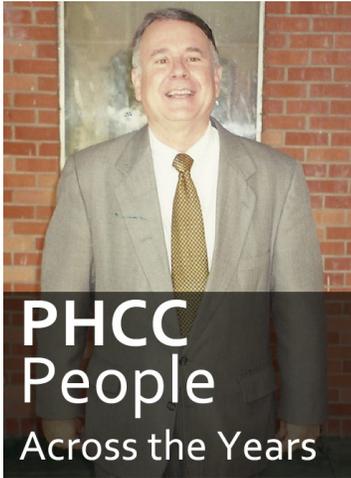
Above: Greg Pendleton with a visiting organizer in 1999.
Right: Bill Ward standing between his mother (left) and Betty Jo Thibault, Sept. 22, 2002.





People gathered, over the years, for various reasons. But mostly they gathered for fellowship or to be of service, and sometimes to say photographically, "I was a part of this church for a while."





**PHCC
People
Across the Years**



Note on back of print: "1930's choir."



Rev. Jim Burton with kids at Easter 1976.



Blanche Miller (standing in blue dress), Mary Hunter (seated) and Betty Adams (next to her mother).
Photo by Kim Painton



1961 Children's Choir during Christmas Cantata performance.



Ruth Leroux and Keith Ryan. Date unknown.



Evelyn Behrle (right) in the kitchen with Kelli and Sheila.
No date given.

Pulaski Heights Christian Church
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lrphcc@gmail.com www.phccr.org
Sunday Worship ~ 10:50 a.m.
Rev. Holly Patton ~ Pastor
Musician ~ Betty Jo Thibault
Musician ~ Bill Ward
Music Ministry ~ Stephen & Jeannie Cross